

# GEEKY MONKEY

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EXCLUSIVE  
**BATMAN V  
SUPERMAN**

DC TAKES THE FIGHT TO MARVEL



35TH ANNIVERSARY SECRETS

DC COMICS  
**IN LEGO**

BATMOBILE ON TOUR

## 200 YEARS OF FRANKENSTEIN

MARY SHELLEY'S RECURRING NIGHTMARE

THE X-FILES // ASTROWARS // ASH VS EVIL DEAD  
GHOSTBUSTERS REBOOT // THE BIRTH OF LARA CROFT



# JUST CAUSE 3



**"THE BEST GAME EVER"** NerdCubed







**“INSANE FUN”** Official Xbox Magazine

**“STUNNING”** Trusted Reviews

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What Miles doesn't know about classic TV shows and movies could be recorded onto a C5 cassette. It would probably get mangled in the tape deck though.



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## WELCOME...

As the credits rolled and pounding synth theme tune played at the end of last issue, Miles' face slowly faded to reappear on a flickering 1980's green VDU, replaced by the curiously familiar face of me. The new Doctor... I mean Editor. Yes, Miles has shuffled over to have a stranglehold on the Geeky Monkey digital universe, handing the retro print experience to an old hand. I've been tapping away at keyboards creating magazines since 1987. To me retro movies, games and videos (remember that show?) aren't retro, they are memories of magazine press trips and crazy PR stunts. With a talented team of writers by my side I hope to throttle up and boldly take Geeky Monkey where no magazine has gone before.

Inside this packed issue you will find our deliberations on the *Batman V Superman* movie that you won't be able to avoid come March – yes, we've had to rework the feature twice as Warner Bros release new teasers. We were lucky enough to be invited to the *Flash Gordon* 35th Anniversary party and got to chat with the stars and eat vol-au-vents. Then looking forward to 2016, we celebrate the 200th anniversary of *Frankenstein*.

All this plus the latest tech, TV, movies, games and toys. Hope you enjoy the magazine. Let me know what you think through the Twittersphere, Facebook or Skynet.

Nick  
Roberts

NICK ROBERTS  
EDITOR

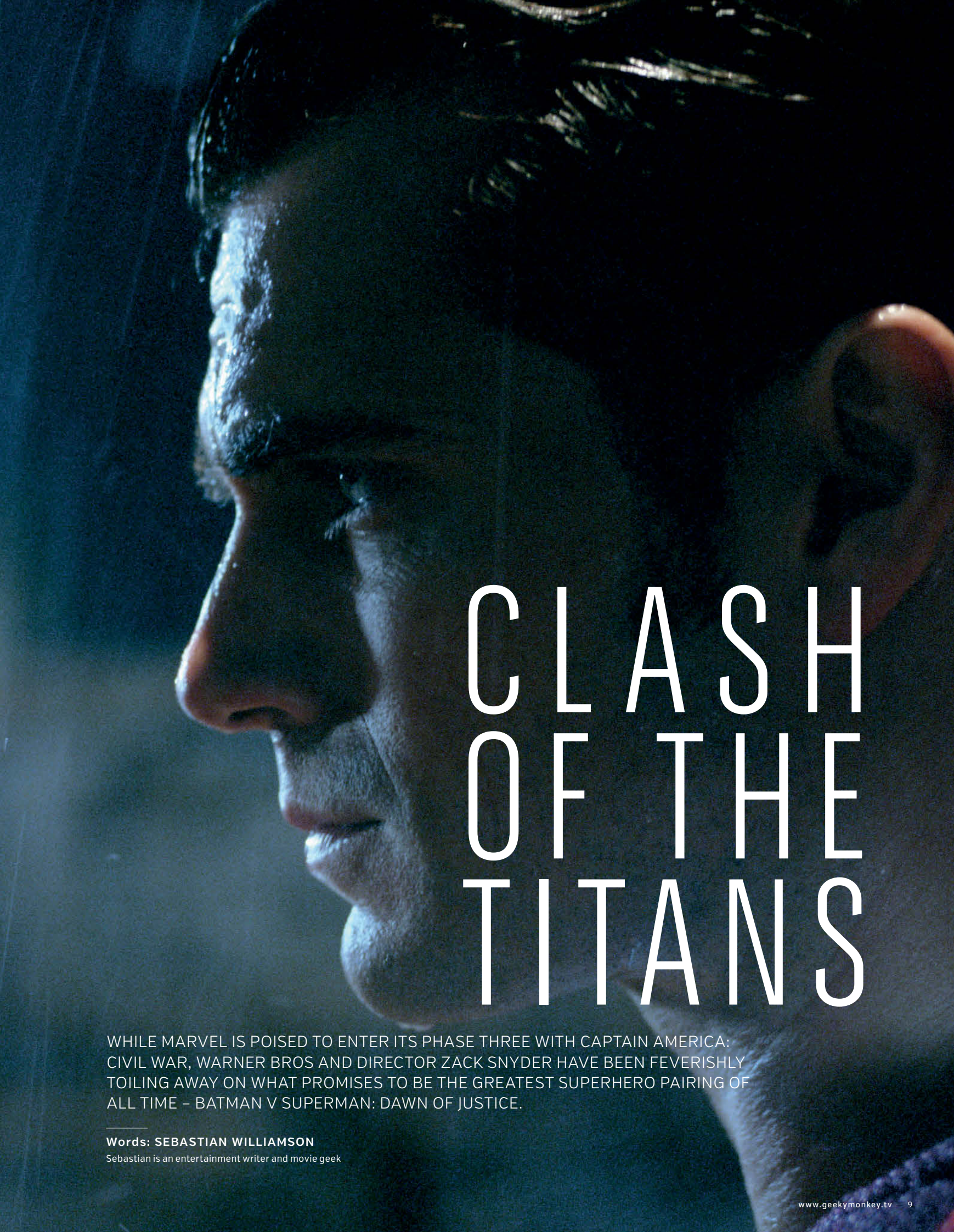


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# CLASH OF THE TITANS

WHILE MARVEL IS POISED TO ENTER ITS PHASE THREE WITH CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR, WARNER BROS AND DIRECTOR ZACK SNYDER HAVE BEEN FEVERISHLY TOILING AWAY ON WHAT PROMISES TO BE THE GREATEST SUPERHERO PAIRING OF ALL TIME – BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE.

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**Words: SEBASTIAN WILLIAMSON**

Sebastian is an entertainment writer and movie geek





Back in August of 2014, and just mere days after Marvel's sci-fi gamble *Guardians of the Galaxy* scooped a whopping \$94 million during its opening weekend, the suits at Warner Bros opted to move the release date of *Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice*. It went from its original 16 May opening to 25 March. This means the long-awaited big screen brawl between DC's two flagship characters would no longer go toe-to-toe with Marvel's *Captain America: Civil War* (or as most fan boys and the press call it, *Avengers 2.5*).

While many would – and certainly did – leap to the conclusion that this move signalled the studio was desperately trying to distance itself from the Marvel machine, they couldn't be further from the truth. Why? Take a moment to think about it. It's bad for box office business if two superhero titles such as these open on the same day, and more importantly, the month of March has become quite the attraction to studios when it comes to launching big franchise flicks.

Take the *Hunger Games* as an example. The movie has gobbled up astronomical amounts of money in ticket sales since it launched back in 2012. Judging by the reaction to that *Captain America: Civil War* trailer online, it's best that the two films are given the requisite breathing room to excel at the box office because it just wouldn't be fair to ask fans to choose sides.

Box office brawls aside, the fact of the matter is this: *Batman V Superman* is for all intents and purposes the cornerstone of the 'now in production' DC Cinematic Universe and Warner Bros could not – and would not – leave anything to chance.

The studio needs this pairing to open big otherwise the future remains uncertain for the likes of the near-finished *Suicide Squad*, the currently shooting *Wonder Woman*, and James Wan's *Aquaman*, which weirdly is not as far along as we were led to believe, despite the fact it's being touted as the *Fast and Furious* helmer's next flick post-*Conjuring 2*.

"We're very early days. We're just starting with the screenplay. He's making *The Conjuring 2* now; so he's had his hand in the creation of, let's just call it a working document, from which to write," explains Charles Roven, Producer and one of the leading members of the DC Cinematic Universe brain trust. "But he's directing that film [and]

he's got his hand ever so slightly in the development [process], but he's really going to throw himself into it after he finishes shooting *Conjuring 2*."

*Dawn of Justice* is so important to the folks at Warner Bros the CEO of the production house, Kevin Tsujihara, has taken a far more hands-on approach to the crafting of the project than anything else he's been involved in since joining the studio. This has included pushing the film from the already crowded summer 2015 schedule to 2016 to allow director Zack Snyder extra time for polish and reshoots.

---

Tsujihara hasn't just been involved in post-shoot feedback either. He's been there since the start according to star Ben Affleck, providing notes during the countless script meetings prior to the Detroit-based shoot that wrapped back in December 2014. "I was really impressed by that and by the intelligence of his notes, and the fact that he cared," said Affleck. "It was not like some guys, especially at that level, where it would be, 'We need a franchise movie... we just need a movie with the names 'Batman' and 'Superman' on it and it doesn't matter what it is. For him, that wasn't it. He was willing to take longer to make the movie to get it right to make it a movie of higher quality."

What exactly do we really know about *Dawn of Justice* in terms of what Snyder and his team have in store for both characters? Despite the multiple trailers, leaked and official images, as well as the countless online 'scoops' that claim to have the inside track on the production, much of the plot has been kept under wraps for obvious reasons. The movie was originally announced back in 2013 at the San Diego Comic Con when director Snyder and actor Harry Lennix took to the stage to read a single, room-shattering quote from Frank Miller's legendary run on *The Dark Knight Returns*. They sent internet forums on fire and tongues wagging the world over. *Dawn of Justice* was pegged as a follow up to the somewhat divisive *Man of Steel*, Warner's attempt at reviving the character after Bryan Singer's rather lifeless attempt back in 2006.

While many assumed it would follow the narrative beats of Miller's gong grabbing funny book, Snyder was quick to clarify that his version would instead chart its own cinematic tale, while





borrowing from Miller's work, both narratively and aesthetically (Affleck's Batsuit is literally ripped from the pages of the comic). "If you were going to do that, you would need a different Superman," says the *Watchmen* Director of that particular road the story opted not to travel. "We're bringing Batman into the universe that this Superman lives in."

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With the announcement in place all of the major players from *Man of Steel* were pencilled in to return, including original scribe David S. Goyer and Executive Producer Christopher Nolan. Nolan, interestingly, has been kept off of much of the marketing for this one in comparison to how Warner Bros pushed his name during the release of the latter flick back in 2013. A mere month later Ben Affleck was announced as the actor who would take on the mantle of The Dark Knight. Naturally, there was much vitriol and questions hurled at both the former Daredevil actor and those who had opted to cast him in such a coveted part.

Even Affleck himself questioned Snyder's decision to chase him for the role. "My first reaction was, 'Are you sure?' At the time I was 40, 41, and had just finished *Argo*, and I felt like 'This seems like a strange way to get to Batman.' But Zack convinced me." Affleck's age ►

MY FIRST REACTION WAS, 'ARE YOU SURE?' AT THE TIME I WAS 40, 41, AND HAD JUST FINISHED *ARGO*, AND I FELT LIKE 'THIS SEEMS LIKE A STRANGE WAY TO GET TO BATMAN.'

BEN AFFLECK

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wasn't an issue, instead it was part of a much larger plan according to Tsujihara, because this particular iteration of Bob Kane's character is "tired and weary and seasoned and [has] been doing this for a while." While it's not quite Miller's take on the Dark Knight it's close enough and certainly a more fitting choice for the world first established in *Man of Steel*, which was posited right from the get-go as the first instalment in the shared DC Universe on film.

It's somewhat of a shame then that Superman hasn't really had a chance to shine in a direct follow-up to his 2013 movie, which pulled in an admirable \$660 million worldwide in ticket sales. Instead, he's been forced to take a backseat to Batman in this precursor to the 2017 *Justice League* movie. Snyder's reasoning for this makes perfect sense, but when he tries to sell this film as a *Man of Steel* sequel to the masses – which he has attempted to do on numerous occasions – we can't quite swallow that pill as neatly as he expects us to.

"It's a different Batman than the Batman that was in the Chris Nolan movies, so we have a little bit more explaining to do," says Snyder. "You just had a whole Superman movie. But I think only in that way, because you need to understand where Batman is with everything. And that's more toward the beginning, but it evens back out as it goes on."

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While Batman's role in the film was shrouded in mystery for a long time, details have begun to emerge on what part he'll play in *Dawn of Justice* now that the marketing machine for the film has slowly begun to crank its gears in time for next year's March release. Batman, it would seem, has a very personal beef with Superman at

the outset of the epic tale the filmmakers are attempting to weave. This anger is, interestingly, Meta in that it's tied to the issues many people had with the final act of *Man of Steel*, which resulted in the complete and utter destruction of Metropolis. You see Bruce Wayne was there throughout the entire battle between Superman and Zod, and he suffered deeply personal losses as a consequence of the two Kryptonian's building-busting actions.

Just take a look at the trailer and you'll see Wayne Towers falling to pieces during (1987) those final moments of Snyder's film, which serves as *Dawn of Justice*'s prologue, only this time we'll see the events unfold from Wayne's point of view and not Superman's as he tries in vain to save the doomed souls inside the building. It's here that writers David Goyer and Chris Terrio, who was roped into writing duties after working with Affleck on the Oscar-winning *Argo*, set up the rage that drives Batman to confront Superman, despite pleas from those around him, including Jeremy Iron's Alfred Pennyworth.

It's an intriguing angle, considering the issues fans had with the closing act of *Man of Steel*, but we're left wondering if this was in fact always the plan, or simply something Snyder and Co were forced into crafting in a bid to answer the many questions posed by the die-hard fans of the character. Regardless, Snyder has certainly made it work in his favour, allowing him to take a much more realistic approach to how the people of Earth would react to this super being from the far reaches of outer space, making himself known to mankind.

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The sound of Batman and Superman beating the snot out of each other for two hours may thrill some, it's bound to grow tiresome for





LEX LUTHOR HAS BEEN USING THE REMAINS OF THE DEAD GENERAL ZOD TO CONJURE A CREATURE CAPABLE OF TAKING ON THE MAN OF STEEL

others, which is why the duo's showdown is set to serve as the glue that binds a whole host of other juicy plot points, if rumours are to be believed.

Case in point – the official synopsis throws up a whole heap of possibilities. Here's what it says: 'Fearing the actions of a god-like super hero left unchecked, Gotham City's own formidable, forceful vigilante takes on Metropolis's most revered, modern-day saviour, while the world wrestles with what sort of hero it really needs. And with Batman and Superman at war with one another, a new threat quickly arises; putting mankind in greater danger than it's ever known before.'

Honing in on that last part we're now clued into the fact that there's an external threat to the characters that ultimately leads to both heroes teaming up to do battle with someone or something.

Thanks to the recent trailer this 'thing' has been revealed to none other than Doomsday, the beast responsible for killing Superman in the comics during the finale of the acclaimed storyline, and the perfect catalyst that will force not just Batman and Superman to team up, but Wonder Woman too.

While Doomsday's origin in the comic pegs the monsters creation during prehistoric times on Krypton, the film version tinkers with this inception to fit in with the DC Cinematic Universe: this iteration of the character has been created from the remains of the dead General Zod by Eisenberg's Lex Luthor.

There are so many rumours surrounding the Batman V Superman production it's hard at times to separate fact from fiction. It's likely that we won't have concrete information on the machinations of the film's plot until the first wave of press screenings, but Snyder appears to be having a fun time dissecting the numerous theories keeping the fans up at night.

"It's funny because every now and then someone will touch on something that's kind of true, but the next thing they say makes me realize that they took a wild guess. They'll say something and I'll say 'Oh snap, they must have seen the script,' and then they'll say, 'And this happens!'" And then I'll go, 'They have no idea what they're talking about', says the Connecticut born Director. "It's fun for everyone to speculate and take shots and think of things and try to sell it. There's an industry in selling your guess. [People think], 'I'm ►



With Batman and Superman at war with each other, a new kind of threat is on the rise in Gotham City.





BY TAKING THESE THREE CHARACTERS, EACH OF WHICH HAS BEEN A CROWN JEWEL IN THE DC COMIC BOOK STABLE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, AND HAVING THEM JOIN FORCES ON-SCREEN, SNYDER IS LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE CINEMATIC VERSION OF THE JUSTICE LEAGUE

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## THE DC CINEMATIC UNIVERSE

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### **BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE**

25 March

### **SUICIDE SQUAD**

5 August

### **WONDER WOMAN**

23 June 2017

### **JUSTICE LEAGUE**

17 November 2017

### **THE FLASH**

23 March 2018

### **AQUAMAN**

27 July 2018

### **SHAZAM**

5 April 2019

### **JUSTICE LEAGUE 2**

14 June 2019

### **CYBORG**

3 April 2020

### **GREEN LANTERN**

19 June 2020





## THE ONE THING I LOVE WORKING IN THE DC UNIVERSE IS THAT SUPERMAN AND BATMAN AND WONDER WOMAN ARE AMERICAN MYTHOLOGY

JACK SNYDER

going to make a fake script and look like I read the real one.' What lengths are you willing to go to?"

Either way, by taking these three characters, each of which has been a crown jewel in the DC comic book stable throughout the years, and having them join forces on-screen, Snyder is laying the foundations for the cinematic version of the Justice League. This will ultimately be bolstered by the inclusion of The Flash, Aquaman and Cyborg, each of which will take centre stage in their own feature between now and 2020.

With so many comic book movies coming our way it's hard not worry about the future of the genre and whether or not audiences will start tuning out with so many characters and worlds flooding screens. Not long ago Steven Spielberg spoke out on the matter, claiming superhero movies would in fact go the way of the Western, which at one point in time was the staple genre of the Hollywood studio system.

"He might not be wrong. I think it puts more pressure on us, the filmmakers, to not just crank out superhero movies for the sake of it," responded Snyder when quizzed on Spielberg's theory. "To me, the one thing I love working in the DC universe is that Superman and Batman and Wonder Woman are American mythology. It's not about making a superhero; it's a mythological universe that we live in. That I hope stands the test of time. They stood the test of time. That's hopefully the sort of magic bullet. But who knows what audiences will want in the future. To me it's about the drama, the humanity of it. Those are like Shakespearean characters, Bruce Wayne and Clark Kent, they have inherent drama built into their make-up."

Despite this one thing is for certain with Dawn of Justice, expectations from both Warner Bros and the fans are high, and unlike Marvel's slow-build approach to the Avengers movie, DC and Warner Bros have decided to lay all their cards on table and go for broke with this silver screen pairing. It's a huge gamble for all involved that could make or break careers in the blink of an eye, and Ben Affleck is all too aware of this. "I think there is a ton of pressure on it. I mean I would be bullshitting you to say there isn't," says the former Marvel star. "If it doesn't do well, that will be extremely disappointing."

Suicide Squad is pretty much in the can, Wonder Woman shooting in London and plans for Justice League to shoot next year the success of Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice is paramount to the box office future of these mega-budget movies, and, quite possibly, the future of the comic book movie itself. If the combined forces of The Dark Knight and the Man of Steel can't pull people into theatres, Warner Bros, Disney, Marvel and 20th Century Fox should be extremely worried. **GM**

### MEET THE LEAGUE

#### BATMAN

Partly inspired by Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns*, Affleck's Batman is much older than we've seen before. Here he's drawn to Metropolis to take on Superman after the events of the finale of *Man of Steel* that saw Wayne Tower destroyed and its inhabitants killed in the fight between Superman and General Zod.

#### SUPERMAN

In the follow-up to *Man of Steel* Superman's arc expects us to find him still coming to terms with his place in the world as its so-called saviour. Expect plenty of turmoil as Clark tries to deal with the killing of Zod, the destruction of his city and society's growing hatred towards him.

#### WONDER WOMAN

According to director Zack Snyder Wonder Woman's solo film will in fact set up the Justice League film he has planned for 2017. As for her role in *Dawn of Justice*, speculation leads many to believe that she may in fact be working as a spy in Lex Luthor's ranks for Bruce Wayne.

#### AQUAMAN

Unfortunately for Aquaman his role in *Dawn of Justice* is supposedly miniscule, with Snyder weaving in the character at the outset of the story during Lex Luthor's survey of Metahumans, and during the final reel when Batman seeks him out and recruits him for the Justice League. Pint-sized role aside, it's safe to say star Jason Momoa certainly looks the part of the King of Atlantis.

#### CYBORG

Frankly, we don't know a whole lot about how Ray Fisher's Cyborg factors into *Dawn of Justice*, but we do know he shot his footage back in July 2014 and appeared on set alongside Batman, Wonder Woman and Aquaman, but not Superman or The Flash. In fact the only thing we do is that Fisher is so confident in the movie he's convinced the film will be considered the definitive comic book movie.

#### THE FLASH

Much like Cyborg, The Flash's role in *Dawn of Justice* currently remains a mystery, but with Warner Bros announcing Ezra Miller as the actor to play the big screen version expect more details to trickle through over the coming months, especially considering Abraham Lincoln Vampire Hunter writer, Seth Grahame-Smith has been announced as Director.





# REBOOTING THE EIGHTIES

HOLLYWOOD CONTINUES TO MINE ITS OWN HERITAGE FOR STUFF TO REMAKE, REBOOT, SEQUELIZE OR PREQUELIZE. WITH THE NEW GHOSTBUSTERS OUT IN JUST A FEW MONTHS, WE TAKE A LOOK AT SOME MORE EIGHTIES GREATS THAT ARE GETTING THE REBOOT TREATMENT, AND HOW LIKELY WE RECKON THEY ARE TO BE ANY GOOD.

## **PREDATOR** // 1987

Endless crap Alien Vs Predator movies and games, plus the familiarity of the character itself in popular culture make it easy to forget what a storming movie Predator was, combining classic lines, cracking action and gut-wrenching tension with Arnie at the Apex of his career. Shane Black who played Hawkins in the original and wrote the screenplay for Iron Man 3 is on scripting duties, so hopefully he'll be able to channel some of the original's brilliance.

**REBOOTABILITY** // 3/5

## **GREMLINS** // 1984

Scott Columbus has refused to allow Gremlins to be remade, but a sequel is coming. Actually it'll be the second sequel after 1990's Gremlins 2: The New Batch. Being as it's not messing with the original, and that there are loads of possibilities for fun with the pesky, fun-lovin' critters, we're looking forward to this one. We just hope that the new Gremlins don't look quite so much like plush toys gone mad. Hey, it was the Eighties, it's the best they could do then!

**REBOOTABILITY** // 4/5

## **RUMOURS**

These movies are strongly rumoured to be in production, or announced but for which no actual details exist. Which is your favourite?

Flight of the Navigator // 1986

Hellraiser // 1987

Red Sonja // 1985

Short Circuit // 1986

The Toxic Avenger // 1984

WarGames // 1983

There was a lot of tree hugging going on in the Eighties. Will Schwarzenegger give Predator another go?







## NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

// 1984

We're not quite sure whether this counts as a reboot or a remake or what. With six sequels (if you count Wes Craven's *New Nightmare*) plus 2010's dire remake of the original, this is surely a last throw of the dice if New Line is to successfully resuscitate the franchise.

REBOOTABILITY // 2/5

## WEIRD SCIENCE // 1985

Kelly Lebrock was the very definition of 'smokin' hot' in John Hughes' wet dream fantasy for teenage nerds. Could it work again? Of course it could. All we know so far is that 21 Jump Street writer Michael Bacall is writing it. What we really want to know is who's the new Kelly Lebrock?

REBOOTABILITY // 4/5

## MASTERS OF THE UNIVERSE

// 1987

You need somebody to script a fantasy action movie about a muscle-bound warrior with bulging biceps and long, blonde hair. What do you do? You go out and get Christopher Yost, the guy who wrote the last and the next *Thor* movies, of course.

REBOOTABILITY // 4/5



## BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

// 1986

Another John Carpenter movie, *Big Trouble* has a very different tone to *Escape From New York* despite Kurt Russell in the lead role, but it's no less beloved, and fans made their feelings clear when Dwayne Johnson announced he wanted to remake it. Here's what he had to say in response. "I come to the project with nothing but love and respect for the original, which is why we want to bring on John Carpenter. Let's see what feels good, what we can come up with and then go from there. And as we write it, if the whole thing starts to stink up, then we thank everybody for their efforts and accept this just couldn't make it." Can't say fairer than that.

REBOOTABILITY // 4/5

## FRIDAY THE 13TH // 1980

After 12 movies and a TV series does the world really need more *Friday the 13th*? Director David Bruckner recently quit after various delays and multiple rewrites of this illfated reboot. However the project is still 'on' with *Prisoners* writer Aaron Guzikowski now on board to draft yet a new version of the script. This one could run and run.

REBOOTABILITY // 3/5



Starring a young Kevin Bacon before his slide into EE advertising, 1980's *Friday the 13th* was one of the first 'slasher' movies.





## NEWS BITES

### THREE PROMETHEUS SEQUELS TO COME

Ridley Scott has confirmed that there will be not one, not two but three sequels to Prometheus that will eventually lead us into the where Alien begins. Scott's talent is not in question, but his judgment has to be. Whatever your feelings on Prometheus, do we really need another three of them? The modern obsession with everything needing an all-encompassing origin story is becoming tedious in the extreme.

### BBC 3 TO BECOME AN ONLINE-ONLY CHANNEL

The decision has been made to remove BBC3 from the BBC's digital TV line-up and put it online instead. The move apparently comes after on-going criticism of the channel's content. If that's all it takes we'd suggest there are quite a few digital channels that ought to be quaking in their boots!

### BILL TO BE KILLED A THIRD TIME?

On the subject of a third Kill Bill movie, Quentin Tarantino said to What The Flick "There is definitely a possibility, [I'll] stop short of saying a probability. For one reason in particular: Uma and me would have a really good time working together again". So Kill Bill is not done, as we thought it was.

### GHOSTBUSTERS REBOOT INFORMATION ALERT!

'With paranormal activity on the rise, a Columbia University academic, her ghost-chasing friend, the friend's business partner, and an MTA employee join forces to bust ghosts and save New York.' That's a leaked studio logline that provides pretty much all the information we have at the time of writing on the Ghostbusters reboot other than who's in it. We ask your opinion on page 30.



## HOW DIFFERENT COULD THE PHANTOM MENACE HAVE BEEN IF...

...it had been directed by Ron Howard, Robert Zemeckis or even Steven Spielberg? That might sound like a completely spurious question, except that it could actually have happened. George Lucas has revealed that he didn't initially plan to take the director's chair for the Star Wars prequels and those three stellar names were among those considered for the role. All three have proven time and again their ability to craft movies with believable, sympathetic characters, edge-of-the-seat tension, gripping storylines and wonderful cinematography, all things conspicuously absent from The Phantom Menace.

So what happened, and why did Lucas end up helming the movie himself? That's a question that is likely to remain unanswered, so we can only speculate. Were they unwilling to accept Lucas' guiding hand? These are guys who would want creative control – something it would seem unlikely that Lucas would have been prepared to give up. The shame of it is that had he done so, we might have got something approaching the film we wanted, rather than the badly cast, poorly scripted, nonsensical merchandise commercial that we ended up with.

## QUOTE OF THE MONTH

**"Do I look like someone who cares what God thinks?"**

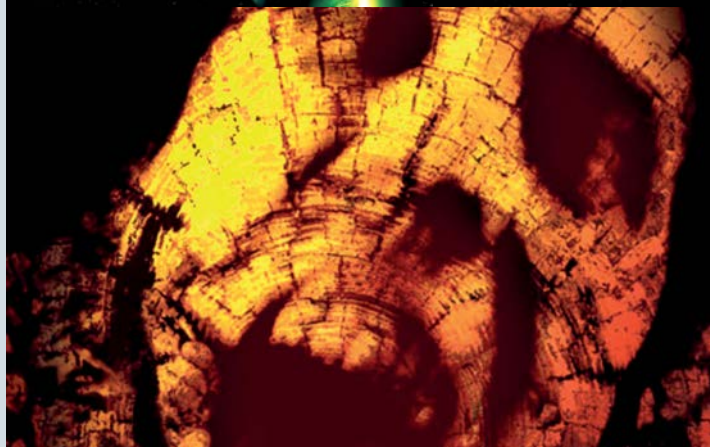
PINHEAD, HELLRAISER



## MCM MIDLANDS COMIC CON

One of the first big dates you need to be putting in your diary for the new year is 13 February for the MCM Midlands Comic Con. The event will take place at Telford International Centre and will be packed with cool guests, tons of merchandise, awesome cosplayers and a great time guaranteed for all. Tickets are available to buy online now for as little as £8. Check out the website [mcmcomicon.com](http://mcmcomicon.com) to get yours and also keep an eye out for special guest announcements and more cool stuff as it happens. You might even see Geeky Monkey there!





## FOUR OF THE...

MOST POINTLESS SEQUELS EVER MADE

### UNDER SIEGE 2

YEAR OF RELEASE, 1995 // £10 ON DVD

When you make an action movie sequel, the basic plot device is already established and no longer original, so your best shot at making a success of it is to take those original elements and go bigger, bolder and more badass than before. The problem faced by Director Geoff Murphy with Under Siege 2 was that the original was based on the hijacking of the battleship USS Missouri – one of the coolest and most awesome things mankind as a species has ever built. So how do you top that? Well, according to Murphy, with a train. Jesus H. Bobbins!

### JURASSIC PARK III

YEAR OF RELEASE, 2001 // £3 ON DVD

Jurassic Park was Spielberg at his most masterful, with characters that were given room to breathe, unforgettable set-pieces and the courage to use the dinosaurs as sparingly as was necessary to preserve their impact. The Lost World was more crash-bang-wallop, but Spielberg's eye for a set-piece and knack for creating tension made up for its naffer moments. Joe Johnston took over the reigns for JP3 and should never have worked again. Crap story, characters you actually wanted to see get eaten and talking raptors?! Fuck you, Joe Johnston. An absolute masterclass in how not to make dinosaur movie.

### ALIEN RESURRECTION

YEAR OF RELEASE, 1997 // £5 ON DVD

You're probably thinking hang on a second, surely Alien 3 – the follow up to arguably the greatest movie sequel ever made – should be here. We would counter that argument by suggesting that Alien 3 is perfectly serviceable B-movie fodder and if you pretend it has nothing to do with the previous films, it's entertaining enough. Alien Resurrection on the other hand is just a big sack of pointless, pretentious shite. Jean-Pierre Jeunet knows a thing or two about making a stylish movie, having gone into Resurrection off the back of Delicatessen and The City of Lost Children. He redeemed himself afterwards with Amelie and A Very Long Engagement but Resurrection remains a conspicuous blot on his CV.

### BOOK OF SHADOWS: BLAIR WITCH 2

RELEASED, 2000 // £10 ON DVD

The Blair Witch Project was a unique phenomenon the like of which will almost certainly never happen again. A simple idea, brilliantly executed, deeply eerie and spookily believable. With a production budget of around \$40,000, it swept the world, raking in \$250 million at the box office. Book of Shadows was hastily cobbled together and shoved out the door to milk the Blair Witch name. There can be few films that lend themselves less readily to a possible sequel than Blair Witch, and the incoherent, over-produced mess that is Blair Witch 2 stands in stark contrast to everything that made the original so brilliant.









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## BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II [1989]

*featuring*

MICHAEL J FOX // MARTY McFLY  
CHRISTOPHER LLOYD // DR EMMETT BROWN

**WE ASKED YOU ON TWITTER: AS 2015 CLOSSES AND 2016 OPENS, WHICH VERSION OF MARTY McFLY'S FUTURE ARE WE LIVING IN? THE GOOD VERSION WITH RECYCLING TO FUEL CARS, OR THE BAD BIFF TANNEN'S PLEASURE PARADISE VERSION?**

GOOD 2015	11%
BAD 2015	89%

---

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88 MILES PER HOUR  
IN A SHOPPING MALL  
PARKING LOT? SURELY  
LIFE WOULD HAVE BEEN  
LESS TENSE IF DOC  
BROWN HAD MADE IT 28?



# DON'T MISS



[THE BIG ONE]

## The X-Files 6 episode event

RELEASE DATE, 24 JANUARY // CHANNEL, FOX [US], CHANNEL 5 [UK]

To be needlessly binary for a moment, there are (at least) two kinds of X-Files fan. There are those who remember the mind-expanding larks of Mulder and Scully as part of a tapestry of exciting 1990's culture, and still adore the random weirdness that the 'will-they-won't-they-oh-actually-they-did' couple came up against each week, but tuned out round about the time it all got bogged down in the stuff about bees. But then there are the other ones, who truly believe THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE, have been sitting in darkened rooms awaiting their heroes' return, and who even noticed when the 2008 I Still Believe movie came out.

Ever since that muted return, a third movie or something similar has often been talked about, but a return to the relatively small screen is by far the best option. Brilliantly, series creator Chris Carter and all of the old guard have returned two decades on, to thoroughly service both sides of the fandom. After years of drip-feeding teasers, a tastefully brief six-part new series of torch-waving conspiracy-shattering action is slated to debut on Fox in the US at the end of January; Channel 5 has done the deal to show it in the UK.

Yes, this welcome instalment of sheer fan fellatio will bring back Skinner, the Smoking Man (despite his numerous deaths and explosions – and the fags) and the remaining Lone Horsemen, while Community's Joel McHale is the one notable new star. Best of all, judging by the title of the third episode, Mulder & Scully Meet the Were-Monster, it won't be so deeply immersed in series lore that old fans can't just leap in and catch up with the characters afresh. Carter has been hoarding topical issues to work into his story arc, but the series 'mythology' will only encroach on the fun in the first and final two episodes.

The tinfoil-hat-brigade-fuelling ethos of the original show was never to everyone's taste in the sci-fi community, but conspiracy theories never go out of fashion, and the climate of 2016 is as shored up with governmental secrets and lies as any 'believer' could desire, so it will be interesting to see how the middle-aged investigators tackle their credence-stretching cases in a world of drones, Twitter and Miley Cyrus. Certainly, they're both looking damn good for their ages, so there's no need for them to steady their torches against their zimmerframes just yet. Several years after Fox and Dana were shown to be living together, he a fugitive, her an apparently reformed medical doctor, who knows how their relationship now stands?

### CHRIS CARTER AND ALL OF THE OLD GUARD HAVE RETURNED TWO DECADES ON

America's new-found love for seasons that don't run for epochs will be good for the old franchise, providing just enough freak-hunting action to keep the beloved characters alive while maintaining some sense of event – and besides, as David Duchovny observed, they're all too old to survive a longer run. Gillian Anderson's career in particular has seen her mature and shine in numerous hit shows, not least The Fall, but if this reunion does well enough, it's safe to say that The X-Files will remain open for a long while – Duchovny insists, "I would be open to doing another cycle... Certainly, we didn't bring it back with the idea of ending it." **GM**







## OUT THIS MONTH // GAMES



### The New Year hangover

If you're looking for something new to spend your Christmas money on, there's precious little in big hitters about. In fact there's virtually nothing major coming out until February when things pick up again with the likes of Street Fighter V, XCOM 2 and Far Cry Primal.

January's only major release is LEGO Marvel Avengers, available on every format known to man, and set to expand on the ideas laid down in LEGO Marvel Super Heroes. LEGO and Warner Bros have got these things down to a fine art now, and if you're a fan then you know exactly what to expect. A nice little extra is the use of voices taken from the movies for extra authenticity rather than the voice actors used in the previous game. Expect more of the same exploration, puzzle-solving and split-screen co-op that remains one of the series' major selling points.

If you didn't try out Life is Strange, then you might want to give it a whirl as the Limited Edition version hits the shelves this month. It's the first time the game has been available in non-digital format and includes all five episodes of the understated and engaging story of an introverted teenage girl with the power to rewind time.

PlayStation4 owners looking for a cerebral fix can also look forward to The Witness – an ethereal puzzle game that harks back to the likes of Myst.

No doubt videogames marketing people could show you all sorts of facts and figures to support their release policies, but they still seem to defy all common sensical logic at times. It's reasonable to suggest that the majority of people are unlikely to buy more than one game a month, and yet back in November, three of the biggest games of the year came out within eight days of each other – Rise of the Tomb Raider, Fallout 4 and Star Wars Battlefront – followed by two almost barren months. It's very frustrating. **GM**

### FESTIVE FROLICS

There might not be much new to look forward to in January, but there's plenty of post-Christmas cheer to be had in your existing games thanks to lovely festive DLC. Rockstar always lays on a good spread, and as snow settles over San Andreas, we look forward to more snowball fights and gaudy seasonal jumpers. By the time you read this, the party will already be in full swing. Destiny will also have lots of Christmas goodies for players, so if you haven't logged in for a while, load it up and see what's going on.



#### 21 January

★ ZOMBI // PS4/XB1/PC

#### 22 January

★ Life is Strange Limited Edition // PS4/XB1/PC

★ Resident Evil Origins Collection // PS4/XB1

★ LEGO Dimensions: Doctor Who, Cyberman & Dalek Fun Pack // PS4/XB1/PC/WiiU/PS3/360/3DS

#### 24 January

★ The Witness // PS4

#### 29 January

★ LEGO Marvel Avengers // PS4/XB1/PC/WiiU/PS3/360/3DS

★ Final Fantasy Explorers // 3DS

★ This War Of Mine: The Little Ones // PS4/XB1





## Four waves are never enough

So it's the new year and any joyeux Noël has long since been replaced by the cold hard reality of a bleak January. The perfect time then to stock up on a movie deal, head for the local big screen, sink back with a bucket of popcorn and enjoy!

First up on the new year roll of honour is ex-Hit Girl Chloe Grace Moretz's lead vehicle *The 5th Wave*. Aliens invade the US in a wave of cruel attacks, which begin with power outages and rapidly accelerate up to earthquakes and plague. As the 5th Wave breaks – physical possession of humans – mankind starts to go under. One part *Independence Day*, one part *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and one part *The Hunger Games*, *The 5th Wave* looks like a proper pacy sc-fi romp with Moretz convincingly gritty, as she leads the fight back against the alien hordes.

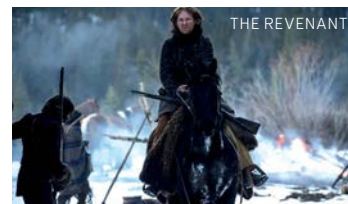
For a real change of pace, *Creed* is a semi-sequel to the *Rocky* series. Michael B. Jordan stars as the son of Apollo Creed who joins Slugger Stallone's Rocky Balboa (on trainer duties this time) to challenge for his old man's belt. Rocky Balboa may have soured the legend a bit, but surely Rocky fans won't be able to resist this rematch?

If traditional martial arts are more your thing, then *The Assassin* scooped multiple awards on the festival circuit. Qi Shu starts in the role of Nie Yinniang, a deadly female assassin in 9th Century China who must return to kill her former betrothed in this ravishing, hypnotic martial arts feast.

Tarantino's *The Hateful Eight* also looks like a fine prospect, an old school western featuring lashings of ultra violence and dialogue so snappy it could be dangling above a pit of alligators. Kurt Russell heads an all star cast, dragging Jennifer Jason Leigh back for an appointment with the hangman, but you get the feeling his fellow desperados may have something to say about that. **GM**

### FRONTIER REVENGE

There's more hardcore frontier action in the form of *The Revenant*, a stark looking revenge tale which sees Leonardo DiCaprio's trapper survive a visceral battle with indigenous Americans, a brutal bear assault and Tom Hardy's betrayal out in the backwoods, before embarking on a ferocious journey of revenge and redemption. A superior action movie, high on sheer spectacle with the American wilderness providing a sumptuous and awe-inspiring back drop for director Alejandro G. Iñárritu of *Birdman* and *Babel* fame.



**8 January**

★ **The Hateful Eight**

// THE WEINSTEIN COMPANY

**15 January**

★ **The Revenant**

// 20TH CENTURY FOX

**22 January**

★ **The 5th Wave**

// COLUMBIA PICTURES

**29 January**

★ **Dirty Grandpa**

// LIONSGATE





## The monster chainsaw massacre

So here's a wonderful novelty – a bunch of the original team who tickled a sick-minded generation a full 35 years ago return to the source material and surface with a TV incarnation of the fan favourite, which actually proves to be a favourite with the fans.

Created by STARZ and streaming on Virgin Media in the UK, it's tough to get too precious and puritanical about a series as wildly exuberant in its absurd grossness as *Evil Dead*. Nonetheless what could have been an embarrassing mis-step has earned glowing fan feedback after several episodes, and reviews are overwhelmingly placing the new instalments in the higher echelons of Metacritic as these ten episodes draw the season to a close.

In a TV landscape where the dour *The Walking Dead* seems inescapable, it's about time someone injected a bit of snide spunk into serial horror, and Raimi and Campbell – the latter not even vaguely blunted by the intervening three and a half decades – remain the best guys for the job.

Plot-wise, the new show needs as little explanation as almost any *Evil Dead* instalment – 'a guy with a big chin goes to a place and fights wacky undead creatures' rather sums it up, but Campbell does stress the changes within the hero himself, with the strain of years of operatic zombie-twatting giving him post-traumatic-stress-disorder issues aplenty.

With extra guaranteed geek-outs delivered by the presence of Lucy Lawless as an Ash-hating investigator, the latest *Deadite* break-out seems at first to be down to Ash opening the *Necronomicon* to impress a date with a little poetry, but as he and his two new sidekicks plunge deeper into the foulness that has been unleashed, the lantern-jawed one seems to be finding that he has much tougher foes to face than a load of screaming cadavers. It's good to have the old boy back, boomstick or not. **GM**

### HEY FRANKIE

Everyone's favourite fantasy-meme generator is back in a gritty ITV (Encore) costume drama, and there's no Sharpe in sight. This time, Sean Bean is miserable Victorian murder investigator John Marlott, uncovering the Establishment-led conspiracy theories that have resulted in stitched-together corpses bobbing up and down the Thames, and it's going to take clashes with Mary Shelley, William Blake and Charles Dickens to uncover the truth. It's quality stuff, albeit a shame that the only real horror element in the first few episodes comes from Bean's regular fantasy sequences, in which he bumps into his long-dead family. Let's see if he joins them this time...



### 25 December

★ **DOCTOR WHO** // BBC ONE

### 1 January

★ **SHERLOCK: THE ABOMINABLE BRIDE**  
// BBC ONE

### 5 January

★ **AGENT CARTER** // ABC  
★ **THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES** // MTV

### 7 January

★ **TODD MARGARET** // IFC

### 13 January

★ **SECOND CHANCE** // FOX

### 14 January

★ **COLONY** // USA

### 15 January

★ **MERCY STREET** // PBS

### 21 January

★ **DC'S LEGENDS OF TOMORROW** // THE CW



# STAR WARS

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Think you  
know everything  
there is to know  
about the  
Star Wars  
original trilogy?



# Timeline



Put your knowledge to the test with Star Wars Timeline!



THE REBOOT OF GHOSTBUSTERS IS GOING TO HIT CINEMAS 15 JULY, BUT IT HAS SPLIT THE FANBASE WITH ITS ALL-FEMALE GHOSTBUSTERS WHEN EVERYONE WANTED MORE DAN AYKROYD AND BILL MURRAY

## FIGHTING TALK

# THE NEW GHOSTBUSTERS MOVIE IS...



## ...a fresh new take

SAYS PAUL GANNON

The internet went into a minor meltdown with the announcement that the 1984 comedy classic Ghostbusters getting a remake after many abortive attempts to rally the original team back to the screen for a third sequel. Following an extremely successful 30th anniversary celebration, Ghostbusters was a brand Sony was desperate to tap back into. A remake/reboot was sacrilege enough, but when it was announced that the “all new” Ghostbusters was being directed by Paul Feig (Spy, Bridesmaids) and featuring an all female cast, enraged fans and movie snobs threw their toys out of the pram.

Here’s the thing, outside of the narrow minded reactionary hatred to having an all female band of Busters, there is no reason to doubt that anyone involved with this production was any less qualified to deliver a grandstanding movie than the original crew. Feig has had a hand in some of the biggest comedy films and TV shows of the last decade and is an astute and passionate comedy director. The cast itself features some of America’s best comedy talent, regardless of gender. Kristin Wiig and Melissa McCarthy are inventive comedy performers and Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones are fast becoming the new break out stars from Saturday Night

Live. Throw them all into the vibrant, largely unexplored Ghostbusters universe and the potential for greatness is all there. It’s arguable that Feig, Wiig and McCarthy are in just as strong a position as Reitman, Aykroyd and Murray were when they went into production in 1984.

## THIS REBOOT DOESN'T UNDO THE AWESOMENESS OF GHOSTBUSTERS, BUT IDEALLY SHOULD ADD TO ITS UNIVERSE

It’s obvious that Feig is deeply passionate about Ghostbusters, a project that has been under an unimaginably vocal level of scrutiny from nostalgia blinded super fans. This reboot doesn’t undo the awesomeness of Ghostbusters, but ideally should add to its universe. Ghostbusters means the world to me, it’s my very own Star Wars, and I would rather have a fresh new take on the world of paranormal exterminators than an embarrassing Kingdom of the Crystal Skull style attempt to recapture old glories.





## ...spirited, but a casting mistake

SAYS JEM ROBERTS

First, most importantly – HOORAY FOR FEMALE GHOSTBUSTERS! Honestly, after the unquestioned patriarchy of every other iteration, with Janine and Kylie battling to get the slightest look-in on busts, no true Ghostbusters fan could deny that it's beyond time the gender tables were turned. There's no room for arguing against any new iteration of Ghostbusters on a gender basis, and doing so reduces any argument to so much squealing from white cis men.

But that's rather the point, isn't it? All arguments are hampered from the start by accusations of misogyny, where the truth is that a new wave of female Ghostbusters is entirely welcome – but as the focus of a complete reboot, wiping all trace of the lives of Peter, Egon, Winston and Ray from existence? It is the most astonishing example of Hollywood being devoid of ideas, playing the gender card to protect the new 'creative' team from criticisms of cultural vandalism, in the name of generating maximum turnover.

Come on, old school GB fans, for all Aykroyd's years of teasing, with the loss of Ramis, we knew the game was up, and any third movie was going to be problematic at best. But to start from scratch shows a total ignorance of what always

made Ghostbusters great – and it was certainly never about fighting ghosts, that's a concept far older than Aykroyd. The lasting charm of Ghostbusters was always those characters, and that universe which has been carefully built up and enriched in an array of media for over thirty years.

### FOR ALL AYKROYD'S YEARS OF TEASING, WITH THE LOSS OF RAMIS, WE KNEW THE GAME WAS UP

True, that sausagefest universe will always be there, but for movie purposes, to cast the entire timeline aside, reducing the old guard to tacky cameos rather than building on one of the most beloved film franchises in history is an error of Walter Peck proportions.

But relax, those of you who fret your childhood is being over-written in the name of corporate greed. Tank or thrive, the talent working on this project clearly cannot compare to the likes of Ramis, Aykroyd, Murray, Hudson and Reitman, and it will never replace the original.

What happened to the original Ghostbusters team? All will be revealed in July.



# YOUR SAY

NOW IT'S THE TURN OF THE GEEKY MONKEY SOCIAL MEDIA TRIBE – WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE ALL-FEMALE GHOSTBUSTERS REBOOT?

## FIGHTING



Are you happy with the new cast, or do you think that the remaining aging originals should keep bustin'?

*I'm still not sure to be honest (not really about the all female cast, but an actual new film/reboot) but I'm willing to watch and give it a go. I just hope it stays true to the spirit of the original films.*

**RICHARD PECK**

**I have every faith in Paul Feig to deliver an enjoyable ride full of belly laughs. Every generation needs its heroes.**

**MARTIN S**

*Paul Feig is also the most well dressed man in Hollywoodland and I have every faith in a man that shops off Savile Row.*

**MARTIN S (AGAIN)**

**Meh.**

**DRAX THE DESTROYER**

Why should it matter if the Hollywood machine has chosen to put ladies in the lead roles this time around? The more important question is, "Why the hell didn't they just leave it in the box?" They are never going to recapture the pure joy of the original movies. Those guys were just comedy geni at the top of their game.

**LLOYD MANGRAM**

**I think it's easy to immediately dismiss the reboot but I think we need to give it a chance. To be honest, I would prefer they do it like this rather than mess about rebooting the original with a new male cast that all try to act exactly like Dan Ackroyd, etc. as they simply would not be able to match those awesome performances.**

**MATTHEW THOMAS**

**Who ya gonna call? The Women's Institute!**

**BIGGEOFF23**

*I realise this is being sold to us as a blow for feminism and progress, but isn't it just a fancy way of dressing up the creative poverty and managerial fear that infects Hollywood from top to bottom? People of the cineplexes, you voted for this drivel every time you shelled out for Transformers and The Avengers, and every time you tweeted excitedly to your friends that you were standing in a queue for a press conference at a Comic Con. Vote with your wallets.*

**CICERO36**



**Without the dream team of Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis and Ernie Hudson (at a push) there is no Ghostbusters. Sadly they left it far too late, particularly as Ramis is dead. A new movie should have come along at least 20 years ago, leaving a five year gap between Ghostbusters II and the new one.**

TIMOTHY42

*I heard Ozzy Osbourne is in it? Probably playing a ghost as he looks half dead most of the time!*

TRACEY MULVERN

*Why? Just why? Why would you give this movie to a director that has made Bridesmaids and The Heat? It's like someone in Hollywood is taking your childhood and just sliming it!*

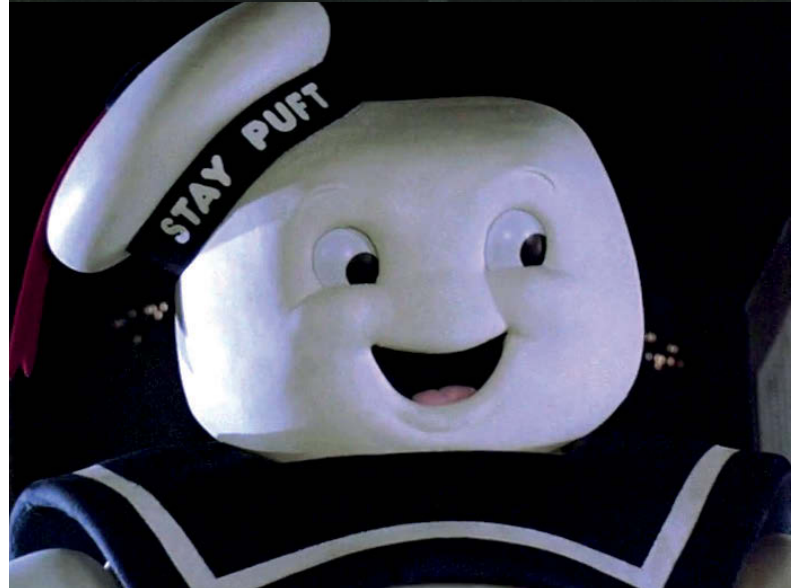
ADRIAN PIFFLER

Sure, why not? I actually think it could be a good take on re-invigorating the franchise. You couldn't just have Bill Murray and the original cast returning as geriatric Ghostbusters. Shame there's no real link to the original though. No problems with a female cast in principle, the writer's from Parks and Rec which promises good things and casting Chris Hemsworth as the receptionist is inspired. Shame Emma Stone passed on it though!

MARK DAVIDSON

**I'm prepared to keep an open mind with this one. Any doubts I have about the reboot stem from the problems of an updated version of such a classic rather than the all-female cast, though. Paul Feig is a smart cookie and will surely approach the original with the care and respect it deserves, so let's just wait and see, and judge the film on its own merits.**

JAMES OAKWOOD



# BACK





# READING MATTERS

Words: JOHN HOULIHAXN

Author of the Seraph books and ex-Editor-in-Chief of CVG.com

OUR IN-HOUSE BOOKWORM TAKES A FLICK THROUGH ALL THE BOOKS YOU WISH YOU HAD FOR CHRISTMAS...

Well, the crackers have all been pulled, the turkey sandwiches are starting to go stale and all your trousers seem to have shrunk several sizes. So the best way to kick off that Christmas torpor and prepare yourself for the harsh January weather ahead is to bury yourself in a damn good book and ignore this, the most trying time of the year. Fortunately, publishers seem to have realised that everyone needs a decent read in the bleak midwinter and have started to release some fine offerings for your reading pleasure.



## DOCTOR WHO: FOUR DOCTORS

PAUL CORNELL, NEIL EDWARDS

If time and relative dimensions in space are more your bag of onions, then there's a fantastic offering in prospect in the form of the graphic novel Doctor Who: Four Doctors by Paul Cornell and Neil Edwards. It features the tenth, eleventh and twelfth Doctors (Tennant, Smith and Capaldi, for those of you keeping

count). United for the first time when an improbable enemy manoeuvres them into a chance meeting, the Doctors must use all their wits, cunning and adaptability to team up with past and present selves, uncover and defeat their nemesis. But who is he? The more astute of you will notice that's only three Doctors, so what or perhaps Who is going on?



## BATMAN: THE DOOM THAT CAME TO GOTHAM

MIKE MIGNOLA, TROY NIXEY

More graphic novel goodness appears in the form of Batman: The Doom that came to Gotham, which collects all three books from the comic series in one handy softback volume. Co-written by Hellboy creator Mike Mangala, this distinctive and rather beautifully drawn Batman tale sees Bruce

Wayne unintentionally unleash a dark evil on Gotham as he returns from a rescue mission. With guest appearances from a host of Batman villains like the Penguin, the Demon, Man-Bat, Ra's al Ghul and many more, the Dark Knight certainly looks like he'll have his work cut out to defeat the Doom that hangs over his favourite metropolis.



## STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

ALAN DEAN FOSTER

If you haven't tired of seeing The Force Awakens multiple times at the movies, then hot on the heels of JJ's all-conquering phenomenon comes Alan Dean Foster's novelisation of this Christmas's biggest blockbuster. Dean Foster has proven a clever, adept author, highly capable of translating big

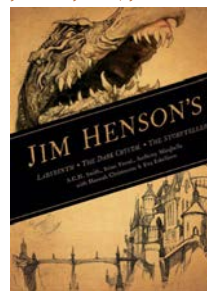
screen action to the written word on everything from the Alien series to the original Star Wars, ghosting From the Adventures of Luke Skywalker for George Lucas as well as impressive off-shoots like Star Wars: Splinter in the Mind's

## THE PLOT HAS BEEN KEPT STRICTLY UNDER WRAPS, APART FROM THE ENDLESS INTERNET FRAME-BY-FRAME ANALYSIS

Eye. Naturally the plot has been kept strictly under wraps, apart from the endless internet frame-by-frame analysis of every trailer, but new characters like Rey and Finn should prove intriguing and slip in seamlessly alongside the series stalwarts like Solo and Leia. Whatever happens, this will be a new and novel way to experience the Awakens universe, via the force... of words.

## HENSON NOVEL SLIPCASE BOX SET

JERRY JUHL, JIM HENSON



The Jim Henson slipcase boxset is a splendid re-issue of some of the muppet master's finest work in the form of novelisations of his acclaimed The Dark Crystal, Labyrinth and The Storyteller (all fine works of traditional high fantasy). They'll no doubt look as impressive on the printed page as they did on the big screen, being full of Henson's traditional if still

supremely charming take on the art of storytelling. Warm and affectionate, this is real comfort reading, best enjoyed in room lit by a roaring fire and (if possible) a talking dog.





## WIN! STAR WARS X-WING MINATURES GAMES & MILLENNIUM FALCONS COMPETITION TIME!



TAKE COMMAND OF RESISTANCE  
X-WINGS AND IMPERIAL TIE FIGHTERS  
WITH OUR EXCLUSIVE PRIZES

Fantasy Flight Games has created a new version of their Star Wars X-Wing Miniatures game to coincide with the release of The Force Awakens. Using the brilliantly detailed miniature models and fact cards, you and an opponent can battle it out for galaxy supremacy. Plot your manoeuvres, take aim at your opponent and fire. The game is simple to pick up and play, but has plenty of depth to keep the most die-hard Star Wars fan playing for many years to come. Well at least until the next movie!

**To be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is:**

**A. Facebook:** Visit our Facebook page at [facebook.com/geekymonkeymag](https://www.facebook.com/geekymonkeymag) and like and share the competition post.

**OR**  
**B. Twitter:** Go to [twitter.com/thegeekymonkey](https://twitter.com/thegeekymonkey) and like and retweet the competition tweet.

Not too much to ask for a chance of winning some superb Star Wars merchandise, eh?

The winner will be chosen and notified on 27 January 2016.



**TERMS & CONDITIONS:** This competition is open to readers of Geeky Monkey residing in the UK and Ireland. Employees of Uncooked Media Ltd and their families are not eligible to enter. One winner will be selected on 27 January 2016 and contacted via their Facebook or Twitter account. Prizes will be delivered to mainland UK and Ireland addresses only, and Uncooked Media Ltd reserves the right to withdraw one or all prizes without notification. The Editor's decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



FLASH GORDON

35TH ANNIVERSARY



FLASH



# SARY

ONE OF CINEMA'S MOST BELOVED SCI-FI ROMPS IS 35 YEARS OLD THIS MONTH, BUT IS IT REALLY A CAMP CLASSIC AND WHAT WOULD THE SEQUEL HAVE BEEN IF IT WAS MADE?

Words: DAVID JENKINS

David has worked as an entertainment journalist for 16 years











Despite being a pop culture icon that has existed for over 80 years, if you say the words ‘Flash Gordon’ to anyone, particularly anyone in the UK, it’s Brian Blessed and the 1980 cult classic that they’re going to immediately think of. Probably while grinning broadly and then humming a bit of Queen’s soundtrack. The movie was something close to a flop in the US, but the affection for the bizarre British-American-Italian co-production has only grown over the years – to the point where this year’s 35th anniversary was celebrated in more lavish style than ever.

In issue three we detailed the efforts of documentary maker Lisa Downs to create a film dedicated to the movie’s 35th anniversary. As the title suggests, *Life after Flash* concentrates on the fortunes of the cast and crew. Particularly Flash Gordon himself, Sam J Jones, but also including interviews with everyone from Ming the Merciless, Max Von Sydow, to Peter Duncan – even though he dies in the movie after only a few minutes on screen.

Further information can be found at the official Facebook page ([facebook.com/lifeafterflash/](https://facebook.com/lifeafterflash/)) but as a spin-off from the documentary Downs also organised an anniversary celebration at BAFTA in London, attended by many of the key cast and crew... and Geeky Monkey.

Flash Gordon is one of those films that you assume everyone involved must have had as much fun making it as the audience did watching, despite well known stories of the film’s troubled production. Time does tend to soften the memories of even the most troubled times, but watching the cast greet each other, in some cases for the first time in several decades, the obvious affection they have for each other is heart-warming.

The peculiar tone of Flash Gordon is what is now widely considered as a definitive example of pure camp, although interestingly the actors deny this. The contemporary reviews did tend to describe it more as a parody or send-up, but the Oxford English Dictionary defines camp, in the context of a movie, as ‘deliberately exaggerated and theatrical in style’, which seems to fit Flash Gordon to a tee. But not according to Brian Blessed.

“I find it insulting that people say it’s camp. It’s not camp! It’s incredibly funny, it has great style, but Flash Gordon isn’t a joke. I think it’s a great piece of work. I think it’s a masterpiece. It has, essentially, a comic strip quality which is absolutely amazing. It was almost impossible to cast Flash Gordon because he had to be so pure. And Sam brings this off amazingly!”

## I FIND IT INSULTING THAT PEOPLE SAY IT’S CAMP. IT’S NOT CAMP! IT’S INCREDIBLY FUNNY

“Right at the end of the film we didn’t know what to do, the film had almost come to a halt. But Sam said, ‘No, run it!’ and when the little robot appears and tells him that he’s saved the Earth he jumps up with a great ‘Yeaahhhh!’ And that says everything about human nature and hope. That we will not go into the darkness, we will not fade away! It is the mark of a hero and I think it is one of the great moments in cinematic history”.

It’s true that Blessed may not be the most impartial observer ever, especially as he was a fan of the original Universal serials from the 1930s, but however you describe it there is nothing in the original source material which suggests the tone the 1980 movie takes.

The original comic strip was created in 1934 by Alex Raymond, as a rival to Buck Rogers. The strips were also heavily influenced by the work of Edgar Rice Burroughs, and although wonderfully surreal in their disparate fantasy and sci-fi elements there was never any suggestion that they were playing anything for laughs. In terms of the characters and basic plot, the 1980 film is surprisingly authentic, but if not camp the style is what in the pre- Marvel Cinematic Universe world would certainly have been called ‘comic book’.

In fact it’s interesting to note what a profound influence the original Flash Gordon comic strip had on the concept of ▶





## THE IMPETUOUS BEHIND GETTING THE FILM MADE WAS THE SUCCESS OF STAR WARS IN 1977 – GEORGE LUCAS FAMOUSLY WANTED TO CREATE A FLASH GORDON FILM HIMSELF

superheroes, with various aspects inspiring Superman's costume, the first appearance of Batman, and most obviously, the character of Hawkman.

Although the impetuous behind getting the film made was the success of Star Wars in 1977 – George Lucas famously wanted to create a Flash Gordon film himself, before failing to acquire the licence – the only mainstream example of a comic book movie adaptation at the time was 1978's Superman.

On television though the 1960's Batman show had been hugely successful and one of its lead writers, Lorenzo Semple, Jr, was brought in to write Flash Gordon. Alas, he died last year but according to him Italian producer Dino De Laurentiis was the one who wanted to make the film 'humorous', something that Semple was actually against. De Laurentiis died in 2010, but the cast remembers things differently.

"The combination of Dino and I was kind of interesting," recalls British director Mike Hodges, best known for hard-bitten dramas such as *Get Carter* and *Pulp*. "Dino seriously believed that Flash Gordon would save the world. And when we were shooting it... I'm the old cynic, I'm the *Get Carter* man, so I realised that you had to do it tongue in cheek.

"Dino thought right to the end, virtually, that the thing had to be taken seriously. Which it was. But when we ran the rushes each day the crew would laugh. Dino, ►

### THE DEFINITIVE FLASH?



If you didn't happen to make it to the London anniversary celebration to see the film on the big screen, then you needn't worry that it will cost too much to replicate the experience at home. Not even the Blu-ray editions should cost you more than £10 online, and they're often featured in retail deals too.

The problem is that the holy grail of Flash Gordon home ownership is the Brian Blessed commentary created for the 25th Silver Anniversary Edition DVD. It's just as amazing as you'd expect, not only because Blessed is an entertaining personality but

because he has an infectious enthusiasm for both the film and the legacy of Flash Gordon in general.

Frustratingly though it's not included in the 30th anniversary SteelBook edition (which does at least come with a CD of the Queen soundtrack). And despite there being multiple other Blu-ray versions, none of them seem to have anything but the commentary from director Mike Hodges. The US version doesn't have it either, but it does have a slightly better picture quality and none of the sound issues of the original UK DVD release. In short it's all a bit of a mess for Flash Gordon on disc and there is no definitive edition. They've missed their chance for the 35th anniversary too, so maybe the 40th instead?



# Brian Blessed

ACTOR. PLAYED PRINCE VULTAN

Brian Blessed is not someone you interview. The best you can do is turn on your recorder, strap yourself down, and hope your eardrums last the distance. We first meet him as he bursts into a more traditional interview with Melody Anderson and Sam Jones, the three greeting each other as old friends and instantly settling down to tell their stories to each other. Blessed's are the best.

"Do you know what I've just completed? I've just completed 800 hours in Moscow Space City, with Putin watching, with NASA", he says breathlessly. As if he's just walked the entire distance to get here tonight. "I've completed my space training, MiG 25 and 29s. So I'm a bit dazed at the moment. And the centrifuge and all that. And now I'm first reserve, and I'm going to the International Space Station in April."

Everyone is speechless, which is just how Blessed seems to like it, as he admits: "That's my biggest love in life, is space!"

**His second seems to be flirting with women, as he, quite accurately, points out how amazing Anderson looks – before reminiscing about how he managed to convince director Mike Hodges to let him goose her character during the opening sequence in Sky City. Pausing only to chuckle at the memory, he then launches into further reminisces about the production.**

"I tried like hell to get Buster Crabbe (the Flash Gordon actor in the Universal serials) to take you both to the aircraft," he tells Anderson and Jones. "I said to Dino, I said, 'Why can't, when Flash and Melody are going to the aircraft, why can't his father escort him? And that could be Buster Crabbe!' He wanted passionately to do it."

**Not one of the actors or crew, not even Anderson, can mention De Laurentiis' name without immediately launching into an impression of his thick, croaky Italian accent. According to Blessed his answer to the Buster Crabbe cameo was, "I want to cut with the past". And Blessed's answer to that was, "You're a miserable bugger Dino".**

"Every time he came in Mike [Hodges] used to get so nervous, he couldn't direct", recalls Blessed. "But Dino would come in, with his henchmen, and I'm flying there, because I've got an extra wire on me bollocks to hold me in position. And it would take the stuntmen bloody ages to get the wings working and then it would all fall apart when he came in. So I said, 'Go fuck off Dino! Dino fuck off! We can't get anything fucking done



## I PRETENDED TO BE A HAWKMAN, JUMPING DOWN THE EMBANKMENTS IN FRONT OF THE FLYING SCOTSMAN

while you're here! Everybody's nervous and it's gonna cost money'. And he said to me, 'I'll fuck off! I'll fuck off!'

**As Anderson and Jones depart we sit down for a slightly more sober reflection on what Blessed has just revealed to be his first love.**

"It's always been space", he says. "Acting comes very second to space. And of course I'm an explorer – Everest and South America and the Antarctic and the Arctic."

"I was with Ranulph Fiennes last night", he casually reveals. "At the Royal Geographical Society, giving a big speech about Everest. And there were all the top explorers in the world, from Helen Skelton to Chris Bonington, and I was giving a speech about when I climbed Everest."

"So that's kind of my life, but when I was six years of age we were told in school, in Yorkshire by Mrs Gomersal, that there are other worlds besides our own. 'What?' Because, I thought the

stars were just flecks of light, angels in the sky. 'What?!' And there's one called Mars, and she described it and of course I painted red Mars. And I've been haunted ever since."

"And I've been heartbroken ever since because we are still not there!" This last line is bellowed out with some anger, as it becomes clear just how passionately Blessed feels about space exploration – especially the UK's now squandered expertise during the '50s. "Over the years I got to know [Colin] Pillinger [the creator of the ill-fated Beagle 2 Mars lander] and I'm working now with Skylon in Abingdon, who are developing spaceplanes for the Moon."

"And so I'm part of the space programme. I made a film where we simulate going to Mars, 'cause there's a mountain on Mars three or four times higher than Mount Everest," instructs Blessed. "Olympus Mons", I interject, in an attempt to prove I am still following his breakneck narration.

"That's right! So we made this film, I'm helping the space programme, I'm helping NASA, I'm helping the Russians, I'm helping the Europeans, and now I'm a fully qualified cosmonaut. So Flash Gordon for me is a kind of reality!"

**Especially given his earlier comments about Buster Crabbe it comes as no surprise to find that Blessed was a fan of the early serials, and science fiction in general.**

"I saw the black and white serials, yes, when I was in Goldthorpe, which was sensational. They'd spent millions on it, so the special effects were rather brilliant."

"I pretended to be a Hawkman, jumping down the embankments in front of the Flying Scotsman. So when I heard they were gonna do it – I was playing I, Claudius at the time – I went to Elstree and I met Dino for the first time. And after about three interviews I said, 'I tell you what Dino, if you don't give me this part I'll break your neck, I'll break your back, I'll tear your cock off!'"

**And the rest, as they say, is history...**





would say, ‘What? Why they laugh?’ And I had to ask the crew to please not laugh during the rushes because Dino doesn’t think it’s funny and he’s very confused.

“So It was a combination of his child-like quality and my cynical side. He kept me on the rails, really, in terms of taking it seriously on a different level. So... I was lucky.”

Unfortunately the film was not lucky though. It was a major hit in the UK, and for years was one of the most successful movies of all time here, making almost as much in the UK as it did in the US. Although whether this is due to the British audiences having a natural affinity for the cast and the film’s tongue in cheek attitude is open to debate.

Peter Wyngarde, who played the golden-masked General Klytus, suggests that it may have been the unusual mix of genres and tone which was the problem for Americans. “They didn’t get it at all, because they don’t have that sense of send-up. And yet they do. In a lot of their shows... Seinfeld is my favourite show to watch, because it’s so funny.”

Wyngarde suggests it’s not so much the humour as it is the mixture of styles, with the leads playing things straight but those on the periphery of the film indulging in a lighter tone. “Flash Gordon is like a schoolboy hero, so they think you can’t play around,” says Wyngarde. “Those two things are too contrasting, the hero and trying to be funny. You can’t send up a hero there, it’s like sending up Abraham Lincoln.”

But Flash Gordon was also a hit in Europe and Asia, where the excuse of finding appeal in local talent or the film’s panto-like qualities could not be made. The majority of the cast and crew put the lack of American success down simply to marketing, with the US posters focusing on Ming the Merciless rather than Flash Gordon himself.

There is a clear reason for that: the infamous falling out between Jones and De Laurentiis, that meant that not only did Jones not do any major publicity for the film but he was also unavailable for dialogue work in post production. This in turn lead to much of his performance being dubbed by a different, and to this day unnamed, actor.

“If Sam had been allowed to go out on all the talk shows things would have been different”, says Melody Anderson, the actress who played Dale Arden.

The exact nature of the falling out between the film’s lead and producer is still unclear, and Jones’ attempt to explain the matter during the anniversary event still seemed to leave out important details. But the bottom line is a disagreement over money, and not being paid as a union actor.

## BEYOND THE ISSUE OF SEQUELS, THE OBVIOUS QUESTION IS WHY THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A REBOOT?

“Dino and I bumped heads”, admits Jones. “But I just want to make one thing clear: if it wasn’t for Dino and bringing me in on Flash Gordon I wouldn’t have been able to make 52 other films and hundreds of television shows. So really, for Dino and what he brought to the table for me... he’s brought provision for me and my children, and most likely my children’s children, for a long, long time.”

Jones and De Laurentiis reconciled later, but as far as Flash Gordon was concerned the lack of success in the US, impacted as it may have been by the disagreement between the star and producer, ensured that no sequel was ever made – even if one was certainly intended.

Beyond the issue of sequels, the obvious question is why there has never been a reboot? In fact the only live action rendition of the characters since 1980 is a justifiably brief Syfy series that bore almost no relation to the source material.

There have been constant rumours of reboots, with the latest surrounding Kick-Ass director Matthew Vaughn. No one would surely be mad enough to try and create another camp classic (or however Brian Blessed would like to refer to it), but what are the alternatives? A straight adaptation would be dangerously close in look and feel to Disney’s disastrous





## WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT IT FEELS JUST AS WELL THAT THERE WERE NO SEQUELS, LET ALONE A MODERN DAY REMAKE

John Carter, while a 'grim 'n gritty' reboot would sound absurd if it didn't also seem worryingly inevitable.

It can only be hoped that Hollywood goes off and reboots Buck Rogers instead (and they are rumoured to be doing so), because with the benefit of hindsight it feels just as well that there were no sequels, let alone a modern day remake. Flash Gordon was a true lightning-in-a-bottle movie, and it seems appropriate to give Brian Blessed the final say on the matter:

"Flash Gordon has amazing style, amazing sets, amazing music, the whole thing I think is a masterpiece. And people all over the world... everywhere I go people adore Flash Gordon. Because it embraces a nerve, a very, very profound nerve, in our psyche. And it's of paramount importance. And kids now, new generations, they all say, 'Do not make another! It'll be shite!'"

"The film has a purity and a brilliance in casting and sets and music and direction – it cannot be equalled. And I think it will go on and on and on for all eternity!" **GM**

**Flash Gordon is available now on DVD and Blu-ray from Paramount priced £8.**

## THE TRUTH BEHIND FLASH GORDON 2



The end of Flash Gordon features one of the great teases of cinema. In the film's climax Ming is skewered by the tip of the crashed spacecraft that Flash Gordon is flying. Apparently dying, Ming is not up to the sword fight that Flash threatens him with and instead his body appears to be absorbed into the ring he's wearing, which then falls to the floor. After the subsequent celebrations the final sequence

of the film shows a mysterious gloved hand pick up the ring, as Ming's laughter is heard and the on-screen text 'The End' has a question mark added to the end of it.

The answer to that question, of course, is 'yes', but clearly the creators had something in mind for future sequels. The film's failure in the US, and the fallout between De Laurentiis and Jones, ensured that never happened. Until now the only one that has spoken about what was planned is Brian Blessed, who suggested the next film would take place on Mars – which was also the setting for the second Universal serial.

Actor Peter Wyngarde, who played General Klytus, knows more though. As he exclusively told Geeky Monkey, he was, during the shooting of the film, unexpectedly invited to tea by Dino De Laurentiis.

"He said, 'You know why I've sent for you, Peter? It's because I'm thinking, I'm thinking of the sequel. And you know, when you die... the end of the film when Ming dies... he falls down and the ring comes off and a black hand comes in and picks it up. That black hand is you.'

"He said, 'Because, when we make the sequel you will take over the empire, because you will have another head made. A totally different head will be put on you, which will be bland like your mask – only it will be real. And you will be made up with a mask on your face. But slowly, as the film goes on, and towards the end, you will have other features. And the other features are Ming's!'"

"And not only that, but I was to have a subterranean kingdom. It would be underwater. And so that was what he came to tell me."





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## GTAV THE PINNACLE OF V MOD [2015]

created by  
**JOSH ROMITO //**

To many, Grand Theft Auto V is the pinnacle of videogame experiences with Rockstar pushing console and PC hardware to create a lifelike and thrilling game. Well that pinnacle has just been moved on to 11 on the dial by The Pinnacle of V – a collection of mods for GTAV that create an ultra-realistic version of Los Santos. The list of mods included is very impressive, just don't play GTA Online with any of them installed, Rockstar turn a blind eye to most things, but not that.

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#### LIST OF MODS INCLUDED IN THE PINNACLE OF V...

- ★ REALISTIC RESHADE CONFIGURATIONS TO IMPROVE COLOUR BALANCE
- ★ RECREATED GAME WEATHER WITH IMPROVED CLOUDS, REDUCED FOG, NEW LIGHTING, PHOTO-REALISTIC RAIN
- ★ REMOVED LENSFLARE AND FLASHING FROM PICKING UP OBJECTS
- ★ ENHANCED GRASS AND PLANTS
- ★ BETTER REFLECTIONS
- ★ TEXTURE OVERHAUL ON PLANTS, VEHICLES, WATER, BLOOD, STARS, MOON AND EVEN RAIN DROPS
- ★ REALISTIC DEFORMATION, SPEEDS, PHYSICS ON ALL CARS, TRUCKS, VANS, WATER AND AIR VEHICLES
- ★ IN-GAME RELATIONSHIPS EDITED BETWEEN POLICE, GANGS, ANIMALS AND THE PLAYER
- ★ POPULATION LEVELS INCREASED BASED ON THE TIME OF DAY, DAY OF THE WEEK AND AREA CREATING A MORE REALISTIC CITY
- ★ ALL WEAPONS MODIFIED WITH REALISTIC RECOIL, BULLET SPREAD, RAG DOLL RESPONSES FROM TARGET
- ★ REPLACEMENT SOUND EFFECTS FOR ALL WEAPONS

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“NOT ONLY IS THIS A VISUAL ENHANCEMENT, BUT LITERALLY EVERY ASPECT OF THE GAME HAS BEEN TWEAKED, ADJUSTED, AND FINE TUNED TO CREATE THE MOST REALISTIC, STUNNING, AND IMMERSIVE GRAND THEFT AUTO EXPERIENCE TO DATE”



# GET THIS

A GEEK IS NO GEEK WITHOUT TOYS, AND WE HAVE SELECTED THE BEST GEAR IN THE GEEKIVERSE FOR YOU TO INVEST YOUR HARD HARD BITCOIN IN

## Predator Beserker Motorcycle Helmet

\$900 // [PREDATORHELMETSDIRECT.COM](http://PREDATORHELMETSDIRECT.COM)

Motorcyclists and scooterists (is that a word) tired of boring, standard old crash helmets, step right up and check out this wicked and completely road legal Predator-styled number. The model we've picked out is the Beserker, but there are a bunch more base options available. We say base, because each one is individually customisable with a series of options easily added via drop down menus. You can tailor your helmet exactly as you want it with a running tally of the cost as each customisation is added. We think you'll agree the result is pretty damn awesome and guaranteed to turn heads.



## The Dude 8" Vinyl Idolz Figure

£19 // [POPCULTCHA.COM.AU](http://POPCULTCHA.COM.AU)

It's hard to believe it's almost 18 years since the Coen brothers' *The Big Lebowski* came out, but you just know that somewhere out there The Dude has been abiding all this time, and he continues to do so. He can also do so right on your desk or wherever you care to put him care of this Vinyl Idolz figure which, we think you'll agree, captures the essence of the man perfectly. We're already starting to chill.



## Aliens Colonial Marine Pulse Rifle Brown Bess

£500 // [FORBIDDENPLANET.COM](http://FORBIDDENPLANET.COM)

"I wanna introduce you to a personal friend of mine. This is an M41A pulse rifle. 10mm with over-and-under thirty millimetre pump action grenade launcher." And that's how we first met one of the most iconic weapons in cinema history. Meticulously recreated using an original movie prop so all the details and dimensions are on the money, just 750 of these replicas have been produced. Not cheap, but we want one so bad!



## First Order Stormtrooper Helmet

\$250 // [ANOVOS.COM](http://ANOVOS.COM)

There's a bit of a Star Wars tilt to this month's Get This. With *The Force Awakens*' release there was bound to be loads of great gear we couldn't pass up. High on our list is this brilliant and faithful replica First Order Stormtrooper helmet. We love the new Stormtrooper design, faithful to the original, but even cooler looking (and way better than the prequel designs), and this helmet is the business.





## Pulp Fiction 13" Talking Figures

\$50 (£64) EACH // BEELINE CREATIVE/AMAZON

The bickering and banter between Pulp Fiction's Vincent and Jules is a classic moment in movie history, and these talking figures are loaded with quotable lines (fully unedited for the family market, so don't be letting the kids play with them). Created by Beeline Creative, all the figures in the range have 14 points of articulation and accessories you will remember from the movie scenes. Jules is packing a gun, briefcase, gold bracelet and a Bad Mother wallet while Vincent has a gun and speaks the immortal line, "You know what they call a Quarter Pounder with Cheese in Paris?" They're sold separately, so if you want the pair you'll have to pony up twice the money, and Jimmie (Quentin Tarantino's character) is also available as part of the same set if you want him as well – complete with coffee cup! Now how about a Royale with cheese accessory to go with them?



## Star Wars Episode VI Light-Up Chopsticks

\$16 // TOYWARS.COM

It's so simple yet so perfect – lightsabers as chopsticks. Thankfully designer Kotobukiya has done the idea justice. These could have been cheap bits of tat but the hilts of the sabers are faithfully and authentically detailed and the sabers themselves actually light up at the flick of a button. They look great, and they give you an excuse to eat more Chinese food, which is reason enough in itself to buy them!



## Breaking Bad Frosty Mug

£11 // AMAZON.CO.UK

You like Breaking Bad, right? You're like your beverages frosty, right? You like your crystal me... wait, don't answer that. Check out this neat, frosty glass emblazoned with the unmistakable features of everyone's favourite drug kingpin Heisenberg. Inside is a blue gel that freezes when you put it in the freezer and keeps your drinks cold. It looks like Heisenberg's trademark blue meth, you see?



## Star Wars R2-D2 Trashcan

£260 // HEART ART COLLECTION/AMAZON

Rubbish bins just aren't sexy, unless you count Dusty Bin. No matter how much money you spend on one, it just sits in the corner of the kitchen or the office looking crap, but not this one. This fully licensed and beautifully detailed R2-D2 replica is actually a fully functioning pedal bin. There's a desktop version too if the price scares you. Admit it, you're already picturing how it would look in your house!









# THE IMMORTAL FRANKENSTEIN

OR: THE ETERNALLY MODERN PROMETHEUS. FROM GROOVY GHOULIES TO PENNY DREADFUL, MARY SHELLEY'S TERRIBLE NIGHTMARE HAS NEVER CEASED RECURRING FOR 200 YEARS

**Words: JEM ROBERTS**

Jem is a pop culture historian and spent 2000's eclipse lay on Mary Shelley's tomb

**T**wo hundred years is nothing to a super-being created out of death, but this summer marks the bicentenary of the most miserable holiday in literary history, when poets Byron and Shelley hooked up at a hotel near Lake Geneva, with two apparent 'groupies' in tow. The vacation itself has proven so endlessly fascinating to writers and filmmakers ever since, it should be no surprise to be reminded that one of the latter teenage rebels was no 'groupie', but 18-year-old Mary Shelley, offspring of two of the finest minds in English academia, or that a horror-writing challenge posed by Lord Byron one rainy evening would make Mary – surely presumed to be an also-ran by the competitive nobs – the most lastingly famous imaginative force of them all.

Shelley's mining of her own personal tragedies (a mother who died giving birth to her, and a child stillborn shortly before the Geneva expedition), combined with the dangerous scientific

speculation of the times, with galvanism highlighting science's challenge to the very concept of a Creator God, gave us a truly gritty narrative which was worlds away from the supernatural fripperies Byron had in mind.

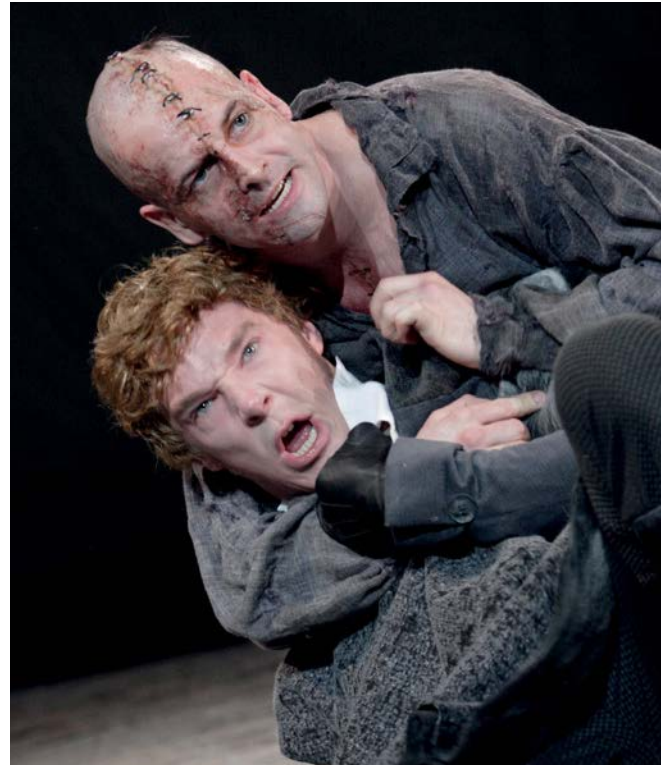
The course taken by her troubled creation gave rise to a fictional universe with an indestructible allure to the human imagination. The 1818 novel *Frankenstein* easily rivals anything written by Shakespeare for popularity, embedded in the highest and lowest culture, with only Sherlock Holmes, Ebenezer Scrooge and Count Dracula vying with the Swiss med student (or rather, his unfortunate Creation) in terms of appearances in every format.

## DEATH WHERE IS THY STING?

The last year may seem to have provided a particular abundance of ways in which the Frankenstein franchise eternally cheats death – but we could have picked almost any year of the last century, and found ►



Danny Boyle's revolutionary National Theatre adaptation is one of the most successful theatrical productions, and has been beamed to cinemas all over the world. Schools can even access a streamed version thanks to the NT's new On Demand scheme.



all the evidence we need that this Monster has never been at rest. In a world of ubiquitous reboots and reimaginings, Frankenstein is an ever-regenerating cadaver for carrion-feeding producers and writers to flock to, strip to the bone of every scrap of meat, and then just wait for it to grow back.

Whether it's the clod-hopping pyrophobe inspired by Karloff or a more faithful attempt to depict the original cerebral misunderstood experiment, you could pick pretty much any year in geekdom and there will be notable examples of Frankenstein being rebooted once again – or just more attempts to cash in on the name. In only the five years since reigning Sherlocks Benedict Cumberbatch and Jonny Lee Miller took turns to play Creator and Monster in Danny Boyle's feted National Theatre production, we have had Rory Kinnear goth-ing it up as a sensitive embodiment of Victor's hubris in Penny Dreadful, Aaron Eckhart earning raspberries in the graphic novel adaptation I, Frankenstein, Frankenstein MD, a US TV rendition which is just one of hundreds of attempts to re-set Shelley's tale in the present day, and Rotten-Tomato-scraping also runs including Frankenstein Vs The Mummy, Army of Frankenstein, The Frankenstein Theory... and that's leaving out all the porn. From the campy of Hammer to 21st Century

found footage horror, this industry refuses to let up. We are talking several adaptations every year on average – certainly, any book attempting to address this eternal popularity will be out of date before it hits bookshops, particularly taking into account TV series (Victor is a regular on Once Upon A Time), comic books, and spin-offs in every other media. In fact, if you expand this overcrowded market to include Frankenstein's stablemates in the world of period gothic and murder mysteries, the incestuous connections between the likes of Ripper Street, Penny Dreadful, Jekyll & Hyde, and any number of shows where Northern Ireland stands in for Old London Town, the works of Shelley, Stoker, Louis-Stevenson and Conan Doyle seem easily as overly-fatted a cash-cow as the Marvel Universe... The difference here is, nobody needs to pay a penny for the rights.

## TO BE FRANK

In cinematic terms, there are two key adaptations that really matter – James Whale's epochal 1931 Universal film, based on a massively simplified play, and the most influential depiction of the Monster there will ever be. And then, of course, there was Ken Branagh's 1994 version which, for all the director's over-emphasis on his toned pecs, ►

## THE FRANKENSTEIN PROJECT

CRUCIAL STAGES IN A 200-YEAR-OLD EXPERIMENT

### [SUMMER 1816] INSPIRATION

Mary Shelley worked hardest of all competitors at her ghost story, and there's no doubt now that she won Byron's challenge. Beginning with the moment of creation, Mary spent another year or more fleshing the tale out as a believable epistolary narrative, before daring to show it to publishers...

### [1818] PUBLICATION

There's no denying that Percy was a crucial sounding board for Mary, but when the book was first released anonymously in 1818, his mooted authorship couldn't have pleased the real author. She received credit for the second edition in 1822, and reworked the novel again for Hallowe'en 1831.

### [1823] ON STAGE

Frankenstein's adaptation to the stage by Richard Brinsley Peake was a huge influence on Shelley herself. The simplified morality play Presumption: or The Fate of Frankenstein turned the original book's 500 sales into a popular sensation, beginning the evolution of the tale as mass entertainment.





## YOU COULD PICK PRETTY MUCH ANY YEAR IN GEEKDOM AND THERE WILL BE NOTABLE EXAMPLES OF FRANKENSTEIN BEING REBOOTED

### [1910] SILENT FILM

One of the most iconic images of early horror cinema, after Nosferatu's overbite, is an actor called Charles Ogle staggering towards the camera as 'The Monster' in Edison Studios' distillation of Shelley's book into a 16-minute movie, cheaply filmed in the Bronx in 1910. Well worth seeking out.

### [1931] FRANKENSTEIN

Although the 1910 movie features a Monster with an elongated head, the popular image of Frankenstein's monster was defined once and for all in Hollywood 20 years later. Based on another popular theatrical adaptation, James Whale's movie rebooted the novel into the 1930s, and horrified a generation.

### [1948] ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET FRANKENSTEIN

So ingrained in the popular consciousness was the lumbering Monster that his meeting with America's second most beloved double act seemed to make sense to thousands of moviegoers. The film also features Dracula and the Wolfman, but they don't get the name check.

### [1957] THE CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Blighty's very own Hammer Horror finally got their hands on the homegrown franchise a generation after Hollywood, and crafted as fine a horror as any to star Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, in their first Hammer roles - without having any real effect on the popular image of the Monster.





## PENNY DREADFUL LUMBERS INTO A THIRD SERIES, WITH HARRY TREADAWAY'S SICKLY SCIENTIST TRYING TO COME TO TERMS WITH UNLEASHING RORY KINNEAR'S EARNEST BUT MURDEROUS MEATLOAF-LOOKALIKE CREATURE



remains the most skilful distillation of Shelley's novel for the cinema, and remains critic-proof, if just for the long overdue teaming up of Robert De Niro and Richard Briers.

With those exemplary films the twin pillars of Frankenstein on screen, for a litmus test of the current zeitgeist's attitude to the Regency teen's first attempt at a novel, we need only consider a few high profile recent releases to carry that damned name – ITV Encore's *The Frankenstein Chronicles*, *Second Chance* on Fox, modern-day movie adaptations *Frankenstein* (created by Bernard 'Candyman' Rose), *I, Frankenstein*, and the recent holiday movie *Victor Frankenstein* (see review, p64).

Despite winning awards and starring *Twilight* alumnus Xavier Samuel, Rose's adaptation has gone straight to Blu-ray, and although the 'Creator' is a married Californian couple, it otherwise sticks quite close to the original tale. However, to compare the remaining two films, it's surprisingly hard to tell which has the least connection to Mary Shelley's creation. Aaron Eckhart gave up the mantle of Harvey 'Two-Face' Dent in the former to become Adam, a reformed Frankenstein's Monster turned modern-day superhero in a direct sequel to the story, taking on legions of vampires in a comic book adaptation from the *Underworld* universe (indeed, the film was to consciously tie in to further *Underworld* sequels with a Kate

### [1970] THE GROOVY GHOULIES

The cuddlification process started by Abbott & Costello meant that a hip cartoon of 'Frankie', as the Monster was now nicknamed (alongside other cute murderous abominations in a show spun off from Archie comics' *Sabrina the Teenage Witch*) was deemed cool for kids, who loved his gentle catchphrase "I needed that..."

### [1973] FRANKENSTEIN: THE TRUE STORY

This cheekily-titled TV movie was a particularly lush and romantic confection inspired by the novel, taking the idea that the Creature was designed for beauty, and running with it – here, the experiment is a success and the Monster enters society... only for his flesh to begin to rot. Nasty.

### [1973] ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN

Originally entitled *Flesh for Frankenstein*, this pervy offering gives an idea of what Italian Horror could do for Frankenstein, although the helmer was Paul Morrissey, most famous for bungling Cook & Moore's disastrous comedy horror *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a few years later.

### [1974] YOUNG FRANKENSTEIN

Gene Wilder and Mel Brooks' monochromatic love letter to the Universal movie, starring Victor's excitable son Frederick, remains one of the most popular permutations of the legend of all time, jam-packed with gags as it is – and even inspired a musical adaptation in the last decade.



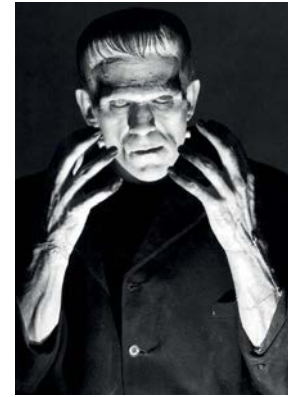


Daniel Radcliffe will have ensured a certain success for Victor Frankenstein as the Harry Potter fans look for a good flick over the holidays.

Beckinsale cameo, if production hadn't pointed towards this not being the best idea ever). Especially once the flashback to Victor's experimentation is over and everything descends into action sequences starring hordes of CG bloodsuckers, the best thing about I, Frankenstein is probably the cast, including Bill Nighy as a demon with scenery visibly stuck between his teeth – but fans of the comic book can at least reflect that this incarnation still works on paper.

The latter film sticks out in comparison by actually being set reasonably contemporary to Mary Shelley's story, and featuring a medical student called Frankenstein. From thereon in, however, the script written by Max Landis (son of Horror King John, and also currently rebooting Douglas Adams' Dirk Gently series for BBC America) leaves Shelley's tale a speck on the horizon, every bit as much as a film with a hot kick-ass Monster fighting Bill Nighy.

A troubled production (filming wrapped in early 2014), the gyst of this permutation is that we see the relatively familiar tale unravel from the point of view of Victor's trusted assistant Igor – that hunchbacked gawd-help-us pastiched by Marty Feldman in Young Frankenstein – despite the fact that no such character was hinted at in Shelley's book. The oddball sidekick evolved throughout the Universal movie franchise, and has been reinvented afresh for 20th Century Fox in the shape of an emo Daniel Radcliffe, with James McAvoy as the ►



## “I NEEDED THAT!”

WHALE, KARLOFF AND JACK PIERCE'S EMBODIMENT OF MARY SHELLEY'S CREATION IS THE REASON THIS ARTICLE EXISTS

In 1930, the great Universal Picture Company was close to broke when a little film based on a simple theatrical version of Bram Stoker's Dracula became their biggest earner in years, and before Bela Lugosi could get his teeth back in their glass, studio boss Carl Laemmle Jr was ordering all the Horror flicks he could.

Early attempts to design the Monster for Lugosi came to nothing when the actor eased himself out of the project, and Brit renegade James Whale came on board. It's unlikely, however, that Whale had much involvement in the design of the Creature, which has always been seen as a close and direct collaboration between Greek makeup pioneer Jack Pierce and 44-year-old ex-pat Londoner Boris Karloff, née William Pratt. As Whale's vision began to take place, all of the Monster's lines hit the cutting room floor, and the voiceless nightmare that would grip the world's imagination continued to grow.

The look arrived at by Pierce and Karloff took four hours to create for every day's filming – the flat head, the forehead scar where the crazy brain had been slipped in, and the electrodes on either side of the Creature's neck. Green makeup was agreed upon for the ideal paleness of skin in black and white, although Shelley had stipulated a yellow-skinned eight-foot-tall figure with long black hair.

There was to be no slow evolution for Karloff's Monster: it arrived fully formed on an operating table flanked by Tesla coils and Colin Clive in full flow. Though many actors took over the mantle of the gigantic child-giant after Karloff, all any subsequent Monster tended to do was hide behind the make up, and subsume themselves into the role as created by Karloff. And it's still fundamentally the same green scarred face which leers out from every Hallowe'en merchandising shelf to this day.

### [1990] FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

Here's an oddity which regularly turns up on television – John Hurt is a modern scientist who finds himself transported back to the action of Shelley's novel, and meets Mary herself. It was a huge flop for the legendary Roger Corman, but remains one of the most interesting lore extensions.

### [1994] MARY SHELLEY'S FRANKENSTEIN

Having established himself as the great Shakespearian movie director, Kenneth Branagh brought the most faithful version of Shelley's novel to the screen (although a 1990 TV movie with Randy Quaid as the Monster is a close second).

### [2004] DEAN KOONTZ'S FRANKENSTEIN

The American author Koontz released a trilogy of popular spin-off novels in the last decade, depicting Victor and the Monster as immortals, with the latter helping cops to halt the scientist's murderous activities. A television adaptation of the first book was less than successful.

### [2007] FRANKENSTEIN

A real forgotten gem from the BBC, and perhaps the most convincing modern-day retelling of Shelley's original novel. Long before blowing minds as Penny Dreadful's Madame Kali, Helen McCrory faced the moral dilemma of creating life in the lab as Dr. Victoria Frankenstein.



## FREAKY FRANKY

FROM BATH SPONGES TO SEX TOYS, NOT ONE MERCHANDISING POSSIBILITY HAS BEEN IGNORED FOR THIS POPULAR UNDEAD MURDERER...



The Creature brought to life by Victor Frankenstein is a tortured homunculus made of dead human bodyparts who murders children with his bare hands and quotes John Milton as he tries to find his place in the world of men. And yet, every October, there he is, grinning out of every supermarket shelf in the form of chocolate lollipops, or plastic beakers, or pretty much any form of Halloween merchandising the human brain can envision.

It's hard to nominate any most extreme piece of Frankenstein memorabilia, as it's so rife as to encompass pretty much every form of product. Discerning fans might favour the beautifully crafted figures designed by Diamond Select Toys to pay homage to the Universal movies, but what about the latest super-cute bubble head from Funko Pop!? Or maybe a Stretch Armstrong-style Monster, cuddly or wind-up Creatures, or the Playskool doll which allowed kids to take out all the innards and mechanisms, and put them back together like a puzzle? There's been Frankenstein LEGO, monstrous versions of Mickey Mouse and the Smurfs, and although masks and fancy dress costumes are a given, how about investing in a baby costume, to dress your own toddler up as a revenge-bent reanimated corpse, for maximum cuteness?

It's not just the Karloff monster, either – figures have been made to resemble the Monster as played by Lee, De Niro, and even Ogle in the first silent movie. Playsets of Victor's laboratory can similarly be directly based on the famous Universal design, or try to provide more traditional dioramas based on Shelley's own prose.

And if all that hasn't had you reaching for your credit card, our final offer comes from the inventive folk at Fleshlight Freaks, who have marketed dildos and fleshlights patterned with scar tissue as part of their own Frankenstein range – purely for those specialists who get especially turned on by the idea of reanimated necrophilia. They bring a whole new meaning to 'There is something at work in our souls that we cannot understand...'

## UNIVERSAL CONTINUES TO OPENLY DISCUSS AN AMBITION TO REBOOT THE BIGGEST HITS IN ITS MONSTER FRANCHISE



titular limb-collector. The pair are depicted as misunderstood medical trailblazers, forced to become fugitives when an outraged society learns of their dabbling with the dead. It's something of a Sherlock love-in, with Mark Gatiss and Andrew Scott in the cast, and regular series helmer Paul McGuigan on directing duties, all of which guaranteed some degree of immunity from flopping on its pre-Christmas release, allied to the powerful Potter fandom. The universe Landis stitched together will probably prove to be just a drop in the ocean, however, as Universal continues to openly discuss an ambition to reboot the biggest hits in its Monster franchise as a Marvel rival (with Angelina Jolie tipped to become Frankenstein's Bride). Nonetheless, and a disservice to Shelley though Victor Frankenstein

### [2011] FRANKENSTEIN AT THE NATIONAL

Danny Boyle's intense stage version is one of the biggest theatre hits of our times – and not just because of the commercial gimmick of having Cumberbatch and Miller swapping the two central roles night after night – it was beamed to cinemas around the world.

### [2013] THE FRANKENSTEIN THEORY

The Monster finally gets the Blair Witch treatment in this recent found footage thriller, with more than a touch of Trollhunter about it. In truth, this expedition to find the Monster headed by Frankenstein's descendent is hugely dull for 90 minutes, then disappointing for the last minute.

### [2014] PENNY DREADFUL

John Logan gives himself all the horror toys he could possibly play with, and central to the proceedings is a metrosexual young scientist, and his tortured Cure fan of a Creation. We can't wait to see what happens to them in season three, so he's doing something right. See it on Sky One.

### [2015] VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

The first big screen reboot for Shelley's 'ghost story' in a long time (ignoring extremely loose cash-ins) takes very little from the true source material, and is more of a popcorn-shovelling tribute to the messy pop culture status of Frankenstein, two centuries on. Oh, and it stars Harry Potter, so that's something!





may be, it should at least be a boost to the Landis family name after the tragic mawling of Max's Dad's recent attempt at a graverobbing caper, 2010's *Burke & Hare*.

### THE SHARPE END

Although set in the same era and equally dependent on the body-snatching crimes of the time, *The Frankenstein Chronicles* is anything but a 'caper', and there isn't a Frankenstein in sight. With little in the way of creative pedigree (although co-creator Benjamin Ross penned the 1995 movie *The Young Prisoner's Handbook*), TFC is built sturdily around the return of everyone's favourite stoic martyr, Sean Bean, to ITV drama, several years after the last outing for military hunk Richard Sharpe (the new programme is studded with subtle references to the Sharpe series, with characters alluding to that hero's regiment, the 95th Rifles, and whistling the theme tune).

However, 'one does not simply' attract the US channel A&E with references to Armchair Theatre dramas, and it's surely Bean's meme-spewing turn as a more internationally famous figure in *Game of Thrones* which powers TFC's hopes of attracting a global audience. His Bow Street flatfoot, John Marlott, is as damaged a cop as any series demands. The anti-hero fights against the system to uncover Victorian conspiracies surrounding the mysterious discovery of badly-sewn-together corpses. While Bean has a job standing out against the likes of Paddy Considine's Jack Whicher and Matthew McFadyen's Inspector Reid in *Ripper Street* – let alone the numerous suspicious plods which abound in *Penny Dreadful*. And they really do get to tackle supernatural monsters in every other episode. ►



The *Frankenstein Chronicles* has Sean Bean, fresh from being beheaded in *Game of Thrones*, investigating 19th Century grisly crimes.





Some impressive set pieces were not enough to save *I, Frankenstein* from a critical mauling.







## JOHN LOGAN'S MONSTROUS SERIES IS THE BEST SIGN OF LIFE FRANKENSTEIN HAS SHOWN IN A VERY LONG TIME

With TFC being something of a dour police procedural, at least while the conspiracies heat up, the attempts to live up to the Frankenstein name are mainly limited to Bean's main character having a very bad daydreaming problem, with fantasy sequences featuring his dead wife and child crowbarred in as a panacea for any plot holes, and to keep horror fans on-side. What these Chronicles do have, however, is Mary Shelley herself, in the form of the preternaturally watchable Anna Maxwell Martin. The use of real-life figures including police boss William Peel, a young Charles 'Boz' Dickens and Steven Berkoff as William Blake lends TFC an admirably intellectual backbone, and an examination of how Shelley's work of terror perhaps inspired copycat murders has a tang that you could almost swear was... well... originality in the bloodbath of borrowed and begged banality that is the Frankenstein field of entertainment. Whether literary allusions make up for the lack of an existentially racked eight-foot killing machine remains to be seen.

Bean himself is keen to stress the series' topical relevance in a world of cover-ups, corruption and Yewtree come-latelies, recently telling Radio Times 'It all sounds familiar and nothing's changed. Which whitewash do you want to talk about? Jimmy Savile, and Margaret Thatcher making him a sir? It's something that's systematic about the behaviour of those in power, who are

protected and untouchable. It's good to see them exposed.' Seen in this light, The Frankenstein Chronicles needs no manufactured monster to make John Marlott's investigation gripping, as it's about the monsters all around us. It's unlikely to be a long-running ratings winner, but ITV have to be applauded for opening such a cerebral, deadly dark casebook.

### THOROUGHLY MODERN PROMETHEI

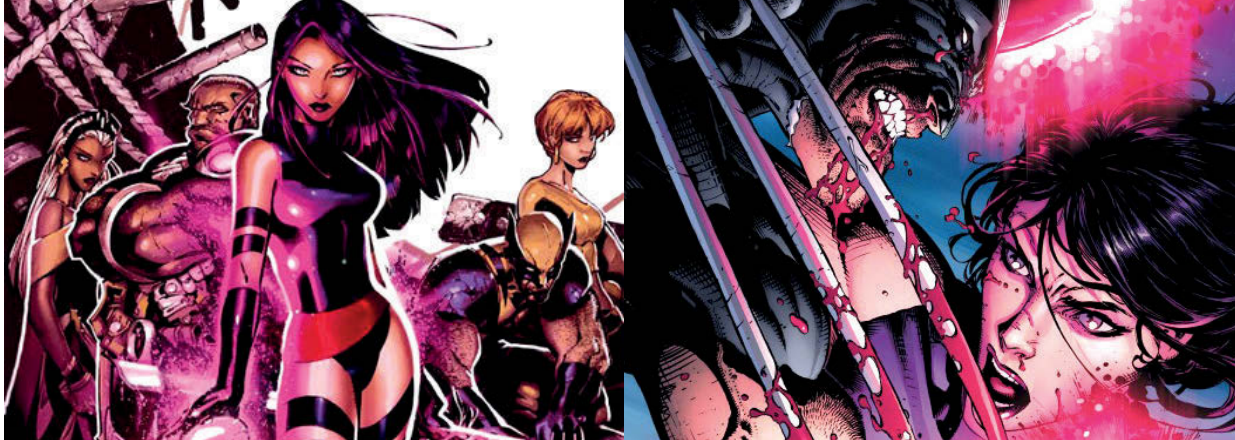
The last of our contemporary flashers of the Frankenstein licence is a US pilot which knowingly uses the tradition of referencing Shelley's creation for its set-up, but despite having the working title of The Frankenstein Code, latterly known as Looking Glass, Second Chance was said to have been picked up for series even before the pilot broadcast in mid-January. Despite the emphasis placed by the creators on their literary inspiration, Second Chance makes the lightest doff to Shelley by almost namechecking her mother (one of the show's twin experimental biologists is called Mary Goodwin). It follows the experiences of dodgy cop Jimmy Pritchard, whose brain is transplanted into a younger, hotter, less jaded new body – and how this experiment affects his family, and allows him to get revenge on his killers, no doubt. As the numerous name changes attest, this is more Robocop (which is admittedly a Frankenstein story in itself) than Frankenstein.

Although web-only, Pemberley Digital's Frankenstein, MD was a far more direct translation of the original story to the 21st Century, even intended as a wacky teen comedy. There are few intellectual properties which so regularly display such a completely elastic attachment to the original source material in each incarnation – a horror which can be better served by a frothy web series than a gritty adult action movie.

But we may be spoiled right now – by popular diagnosis, one of the finest incarnations of Doctor and Monster we'll ever have is still exploring the dangers of playing with life's elemental forces episode by episode. Penny Dreadful lumbers into a third series, with Harry Treadaway's sickly scientist trying to come to terms with unleashing both Rory Kinnear's earnest but murderous Meatloaf-lookalike Creature, and Billie Piper's kinky Bride onto the cockney sparrows of fin de siècle London. This dysfunctional Frankenstein family could take us in any direction – we've seen 'John Clare' (as the Monster dubs himself) kill his more perfect follow-up experiment and vie with his Creator for the hand of the reanimated Lilly, and as the third season advances, all three remain undead, and off-script, with London their playground. The country and time period may be wrong, and Mary's two-hundred-year-old plot has long been jettisoned, but John Logan's monstrous series is the best sign of life Frankenstein has shown in a very long time.

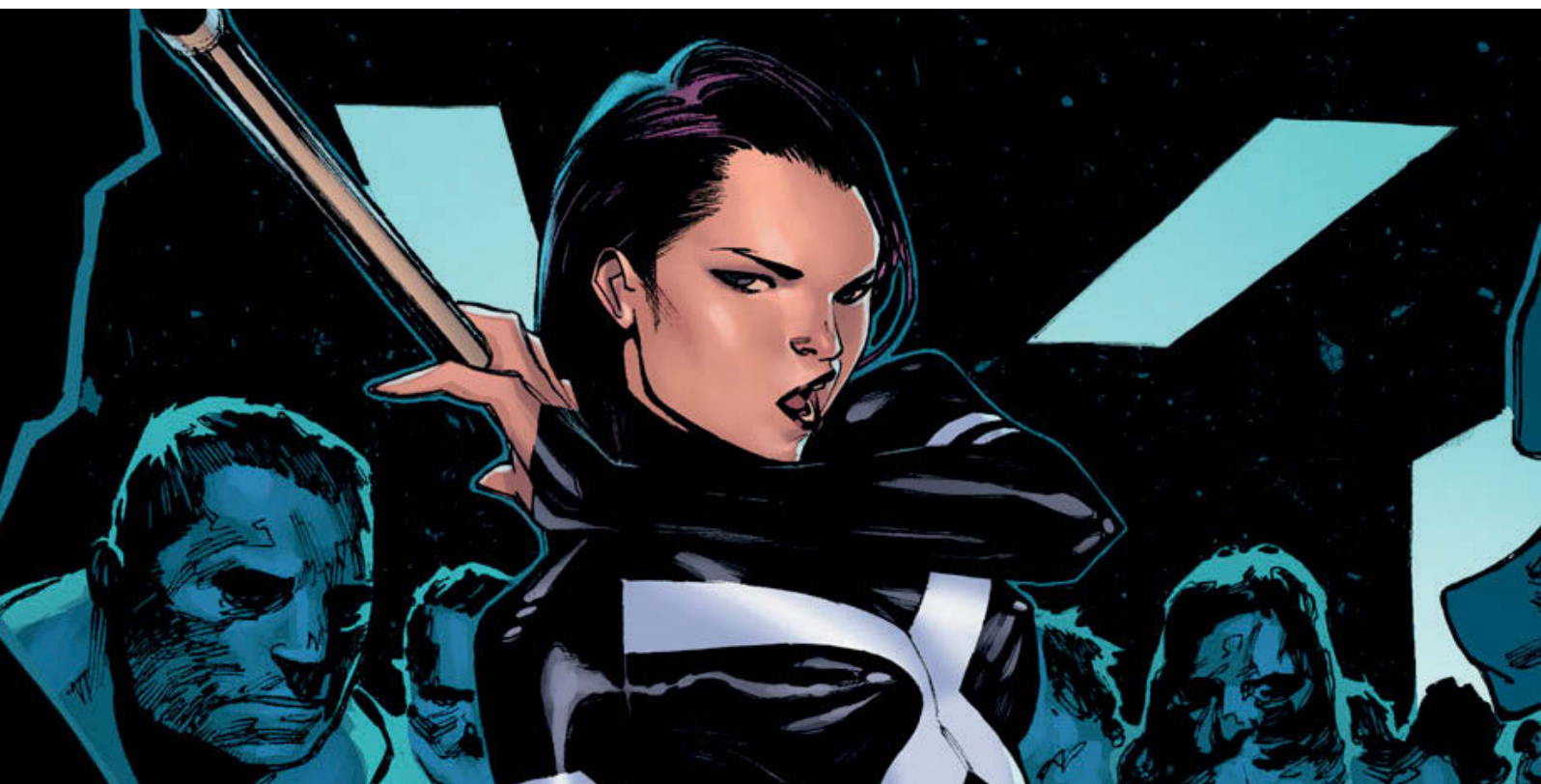
Your move, Universal. **GM**





## BETSY BRADDOCK HAS UNDERGONE NUMEROUS TRANSFORMATIONS THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

**NAME** PSYLOCKE (ELIZABETH 'BETSY' BRADDOCK) // **FIRST APPEARANCE** CAPTAIN BRITAIN, VOL. 1 #8 (DECEMBER 1976)



A trained pilot and a highly skilled martial artist, Psylocke is a formidable character.







# PSYLOCKE

## THE MARVEL FEMME FATALE IS GEARING UP FOR A BIG SCREEN RESURRECTION IN X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

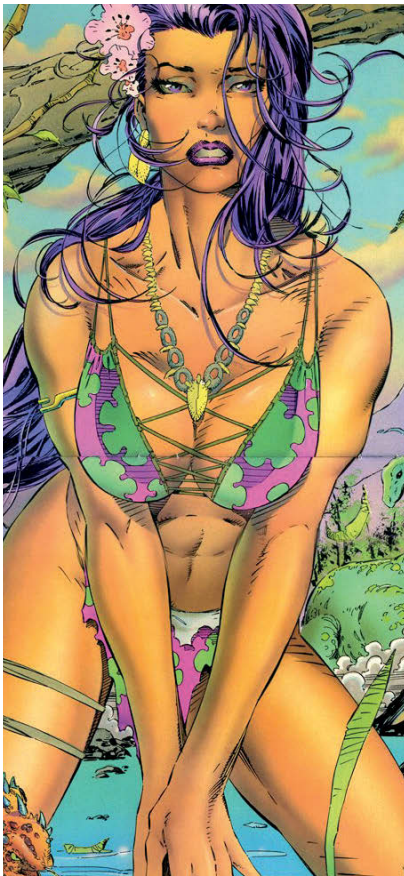
Words: SEBASTIAN WILLIAMSON

### DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS

Telepathy, purple hair, a big ass sword and martial arts skills that rival that of any other X-Man in the known universe, all of which is wrapped up in a rather revealing suit of purple armour.

### WHERE IS SHE NOW?

A stint with mutant black ops team, X-Force, followed by a team-up with Nightcrawler to take down the Shadow King, and more recently she joined forces with the X-Men to battle a Red Skull clone.



Elizabeth 'Betsy' Braddock, or Psylocke to her X-Men friends, is the brainchild of British born Marvel Comics scribe Chris Claremont. He's also responsible for the creation of countless other X-Men characters including Rogue, Sabretooth, Mystique and Captain Britain, as well as the ground-breaking storylines The Dark Phoenix Saga and Days of Future Past. Both of these stories served as the inspiration for the two best X-Men films to date.

While she first appeared in the pages of Captain Britain in a supporting role way back in 1976, Betsy Braddock has undergone numerous transformations throughout the years. Eventually she transformed into the full-on femme fatale that stalks the comic pages today.

To date she's undergone a body-swap, been interred at a concentration camp, suffered an attempted rape at the hands of an evil version of her brother, had her eyes gouged out by her arch nemesis The Slaymaster, been brainwashed by Mojo, and turned into a bad-ass Japanese ninja assassin by The Hand, the very same shady organisation Daredevil squeeze, Elektra Natchios, once belonged to.

In short, it's been a rough ride for the ass-kicking telepath who is gearing up to make an appearance in X-Men: Apocalypse, the third instalment in the brand new big screen trilogy that began with X-Men: First Class back in 2011. Brought to life by self-confessed super geek Olivia Munn, Psylocke is poised to play a pivotal role in the story, which unfurls a decade after the events of spectacularly brilliant X-Men: Days of Future Past.

While this may be the second time the character has appeared in the films, director Bryan Singer and Co have assured fans that this version of Psylocke is completely unrelated to the one seen in the woeful X-Men: The Last Stand.

Despite the fact she started out life as a third tier Marvel mutant, Psylocke's 1989 makeover has turned her into somewhat of a fan favourite. She's ranked highly in numerous Best Of lists throughout the years, including IGN's top X-Men characters, and beaten Capcom's Chun-Li to the Number One spot during a poll that asked fans of Marvel Vs Capcom 2 to vote for the better fighter of the two. It's no wonder then that the character is a regular Cosplay fixture at the numerous comic book events across the globe, including the New York Comic Con and the San Diego Comic Con in Los Angeles. With X-Men Apocalypse mere months away from release expect to see the sultry, purple haired, sword-wielding assassin become the pin-up girl of choice for the comic book masses. **GM**



# HERE SHE GOES. ALONE. ARMED. FACING IMPOSSIBLE ODDS.

## **COSPLAYER** // JENNIFER KAIRIS

Jennifer Kairis is an actress, cosplayer, and gamer girl. She currently resides in Los Angeles and is slated to co-star in a feature film starting production at the beginning of 2016. She is also one-fifth of an all girl Heroes of the Storm team called the Mystiks. She loves cosplaying and all things nerdy.

**LOVES** READING, GAMING, DOING MY OWN STUNTS

**DISLIKES** BAD DRIVERS, TROLLS, PEOPLE WHO COMPLAIN TOO MUCH









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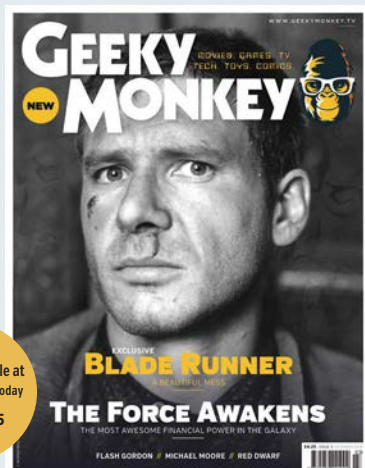
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# KOMIKAZE



OUR REGULAR ROUND-UP RETURNS TO LOOK BACK ON SOME OF THE FINEST READS TO HIT COMIC STANDS THROUGHOUT THE PAST MONTH

**Words: MICHAEL CAMPBELL**

Michael is a freelance journalist, who devours comic books at a rate that would make Galactus nauseous.

It's been a triumphant time for Image Comics, who continue to lead the market with diverse and thought-provoking but more importantly, entertaining and original books.

Arriving with little hype is Joe Keatinge and Nick Barber's *Ringside*, a crime story with a wrestling backdrop. The first issue was both accessible and more focused than one would expect. Think Michael Mann's depictions of masculine brotherhood, combined with Darren Aronofsky's *The Wrestler*. The minimalist artwork won't appease all tastes, but certainly compliments the story and is preferable to a lot of the horribly cluttered grappling artwork that's popped up in other books. Issue #1 also contained a really strong interview with the creators, helping provide context for those unfamiliar with the wacky terminology and sometimes bizarre cult of personalities surrounding the wrestling landscape.

Elsewhere, Rick Remender reached the third issue of his excellent *Tokyo Ghost*. This installment follows up on events that saw Debbie and Led head to Tokyo on a mission intended as their last. As in previous issues, Remender continues to beguile with a surprisingly affecting emotional layer, brought to the fore this month with some superb layouts from Sean Murphy that really allow the characters to shine. There's a sense of impending tragedy to the love story at the core of *Tokyo Ghost* that ensures each edition is gripping.

Amongst the clutter, Marvel's new launches did produce *The Uncanny Inhumans*. This will likely prove a key

title, if the company can successfully manage to broaden the interest in the Inhumans property beyond hardcore comic readers. Whilst we have our doubts, with a movie scheduled for 2019 they're certainly going to give it a go. Two issues in, Charles Soule has brought the Attilan natives to life with great gusto. Having first appeared in 1965, the characters are hardly new, but feel fresh in comparison to many of

## THE BIGGEST COMIC EXPENDITURE TOWARDS THE END OF THE YEAR WAS FOR BAT-FANS

Marvel's more over-exposed personnel. Steve McNiven's beautiful artwork helps too, he creates scope for confrontations with villains such as Kang, but intimacy to the slightly melodramatic relationship problems that have started to manifest.

Extraordinary *X-Men* also impressed with a first couple of issues that clearly established both the tone for the series, and some of the threats that will dominate early storylines. Jeff Lemire's story has managed thus far to capture the fun and occasionally soap-operatic personality that Chris Claremont's cast of characters always possessed during the heyday of Marvel's mutants.

D's Vertigo imprint might have a substantial hit on their hands with *Unfollow* by Rob Williams and Michael





### [COMIC OF THE MONTH]

#### Monstress

STORY, MARJORIE LIU // ART, SANA TAKEDA  
PUBLISHER, IMAGE COMICS

The immediate reaction to Monstress was having to wipe a considerable amount of drool from one's chin, thanks to the staggering, luscious artwork by Sana Takeda. It's one visually stunning effort, combining Kaiju and Steampunk aesthetics to brilliant effect. Written by Marjorie Liu, it's a fantasy tale that convinces instantly, introducing the sympathetic figure of Maika, a young girl who is literally part-monster. Dark and occasionally brutal, it pulls no punches and will disturb and provoke in equal measure. In less than a month the first issue has already gone to a second print, and we fully expect this success to continue.

Dowling. Fortunately, the book looks to be thrilling, boasting an ingenious central premise that has 140 social media users being selected to inherit a share of a dying billionaire's fortune, should they outlive him. Although more of a scene-setter than a satisfying story in its own right, the first issue definitely primed the series for great things, and it has already been optioned for a television series by ABC.

The biggest comic expenditure towards the end of the year was for Bat-fans though. Readers of the numerous Batman books on the market had to contend with the launch of two of the biggest mini-series launches in recent years, within days of each other. Batman: Europa and The Dark Knight III: Master Race.

Europa managed to find itself stuck in development hell for years, but has emerged impressively with Jim Lee and Giuseppe Camuncoli's stunning artwork. There's a hint of mystery about the story, which involves The Joker teaming up with Batman to find a cure for a deadly virus that both have been infected by.

Meanwhile, Miller's take is among the most anticipated of the year, and while issue #1 hardly set the world on fire, neither did it disappoint. Andy Kubert has adopted a Miller-esque chunkiness to his pencils, which works surprisingly well alongside his traditionally delicate lines, ensuring the series looks infinitely superior to its incredibly ugly predecessor, DK2. **GM**



## IN THE ART SEAT

### SONNY LIEW, ARTIST [DOCTOR FATE, MY FAITH IN FRANKIE, THE ART OF CHARLIE CHAN HOCK CHYE]



**When did your interest in comic books first begin, and what books do you remember influencing you as a youngster?**

There were comics around the house or at my granddad's place as far back as I can remember - everything from the Beano and Dandy to the ones from Hong Kong like Children's Paradise and Lao Fu Zi. But the first comic that made me wonder about the possibility of becoming an artist was probably

2000AD, though that was a little later on.

**When did you first decide to take the plunge into working within the field, and how did you break into the industry?** I got my first paid job for a newspaper here in Singapore - I did a daily strip for them for \$30 each. Not a lot of money, but it was still sort of astonishing that anyone would pay me to think up stories and publish them to boot. That process was just so engaging, I knew I had to try to find a way to make a career out of it, though I had no idea how!

**Can you describe for us, a typical working day in the life of Sonny Liew?**

Right now with the DC deadlines, it's pretty much just drawing all day. I try to get out to meet friends, play some soccer or go for a run when I get the chance, but it does mostly revolve around trying to get the pages done on time.

**You recently started a run on Doctor Fate, a book that's earned tremendous acclaim so far. How did you end up doing this title?** I met Paul (Levitz) at the Singapore comic convention a few years back, and we sort of kept in touch, off and on. I think after the Shadow Hero, he thought I might be a good fit with the kind of story he wanted to tell with the new series. The folks at DC agreed and that was basically it.

**Obviously your art is very different from much of the other work out there in mainstream superhero books. Are you excited by comics generally becoming a more diverse looking medium in recent times?** For sure! It's the spice of life, and all that! The visual look plays a big role in the type of story you end up telling, so diversity and art means diversity in stories, which can only be a good thing.

**Having now worked for both Marvel and DC amongst numerous other companies, and produced your own creator owned material, how do the experiences compare and what different challenges do they bring?**

Collaborations offer a different perspective - ways of working, ways of telling and constructing stories. With a monthly series you tend to be put under delivery pressures, which means having to learn ways to streamline the process - using tools like Google SketchUp for example to generate visual references.

The work that I produce which I both write and draw - like Malinky Robot and The Art of Charlie Chan Hock Chye - are always going to feel more personal. I guess the longer term challenge may be to find ways of making the personal work also commercially viable, or else to find a better way to balance the two!







Andrew Scott just has the face of a bad guy. We're sure his mother must love him.



[FILM]

## Victor Frankenstein

DIRECTOR, PAUL MCGUIGAN // STARRING, DANIEL RADCLIFFE & JAMES MCAVOY  
STUDIO, 20TH CENTURY FOX

This year sees the bicentennial of that mad, miserable summer in Lake Geneva when the literary sparring between two male poets saw an 18-year-old woman give birth to one of the greatest and longest lasting creations not just in horror, but in world literature. The Frankenstein concept has ever since proven to be as impossible to stop in its terrifying march to world domination as the Creature itself, with several movies and TV interpretations on average hitting screens every single year.

Although Universal is still clearly threatening to reboot their Monsters movie franchise along the lines of the limitless Marvel universe, this Fox film represents the most high profile cinematic adaptation of Mary Shelley's masterpiece in a while, with only Danny Boyle's Sherlock-swapping National Theatre hit standing between this and Ken Branagh's audience-splitting faithful approach. It's a nice tribute that James McAvoy seems to have perfected an uncanny vocal impersonation of Branagh for this role.

As you have probably already gathered, Max Landis' script for Victor Frankenstein is anything but faithful, and for all but the most adoring fans of the two leads, McAvoy and Daniel Radcliffe, the brash madness of this version has had a mixed response. A long time in development, this film originated as a specific attempt to bring the Igor sidekick into clear focus – a character with no roots in the original book, and developed from years of B-movie schlock, hunchback and all. No wonder this film is so light on lore – it's inspired by an adaptation of a spin-off, at best.

There's no shortage of movies which claim to 'tell the real story' of the mad German medical student and his needy experiment, and this popcorn-promoting outing mainly stands out due to high-profile casting and a budget which is blasted all over the screen in every action sequence. In structure, it's

essentially a co-op videogame you can't control – we see our hero get customised at the beginning, follow him as he solves a few mental puzzles, and there are numerous boss battles leading up to the final scrap with the Monster himself, one of many sequences in which everything blows up but the characters that need to simply walk away.

Victor Frankenstein may have only the tiniest tendrils of connection to its source material (18th century Germany has become fin de siècle London, none of the book's characters appear bar Victor and his monster), but surely its mash-up

### IT'S BOMBASTIC FUN, THE MOVIE EQUIVALENT OF MASHING ACTION FIGURES TOGETHER

of geek-favourite franchises will protect it from turkeydom – it stars Harry Potter and Professor Xavier, and director McGuigan wears his Sherlock credentials on his sleeve, with numerous on-screen displays of text and anatomical diagrams, plus a plum role for Andrew 'Moriarty' Scott, and even Mark Gatiss gets to stroll on for a climactic cameo which must have amounted to a fun day out for him.

But as an adaptation of one of our greatest novels in the bicentenary year of its inspiration, Victor Frankenstein barely registers – it's bombastic fun, the movie equivalent of mashing action figures together, and delivers where it needs to. But it does leave us fans of real Frankenstein hoping that Universal might be aiming for a more meaningful reboot for the bicentennial of the book's publication in 2018. A far-fetched hope, admittedly.

☆☆☆☆☆



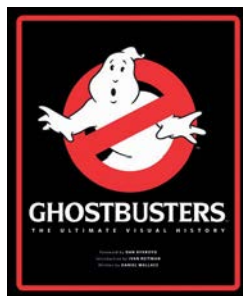


**[DVD]**  
**Jekyll and Hyde Series One**

£19 // WRITER, CHARLIE HIGSON  
STUDIO, ITV STUDIOS HOME ENTERTAINMENT

Any fan of young James Bond or Vic & Bob's Randall & Hopkirk reboot will have been willing Charlie Higson to have another hit with this Dr Who–challenging teatime fantasy thriller. It's certainly been a unique addition to the schedules, no matter how ITV seem to have buried it at Sunday teatimes. But its camp daftness remains a definite acquired taste, so we're not confident of a series two. This DVD could be the only release for what could have been a major franchise.

☆☆☆☆



**[BOOK]**  
**Ghostbusters: The Ultimate Visual History**

£35 // AUTHOR, DANIEL WALLACE  
PUBLISHER, TITAN BOOKS

There have been Ghostbusters Making Of books before, but surprisingly few considering the scale of the series' popularity – so it's not before time that a comprehensive publication has come along. With forewords from Dan Aykroyd and Ivan Reitman, this is kosher, compelling, and positively mandatory for any movie fan – even if real Ghostbusters aficionados may already know most of what can be gleaned here, and feel more was needed on everything that has come after the original movie.

☆☆☆☆



**[COMIC]**  
**Batman/Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles #2**

\$4 // CREATED BY, JAMES TYNION IV & FREDDIE E. WILLIAMS II // PUBLISHER, DC COMICS

Superhero team-ups are always entertaining and who could resist the lure of the Dark Knight bumping heads with the heroes in a half shell? When the Turtles are lured into a world they can barely comprehend, an initial battle with the Batman dutifully ensues. Their differences are soon resolved, but with the turtle's arch foe Shredder secretly cutting a deal with Batman's nemesis the Penguin, there's a climactic battle brewing before the turtles can return to their own world for pizza.

☆☆☆☆

©DC ENTERTAINMENT



**[BLU-RAY]**  
**Doctor Who Series 9: Part 2**

£18 // STARRING, PETER CAPALDI & JENNA COLEMAN  
STUDIO, BBC

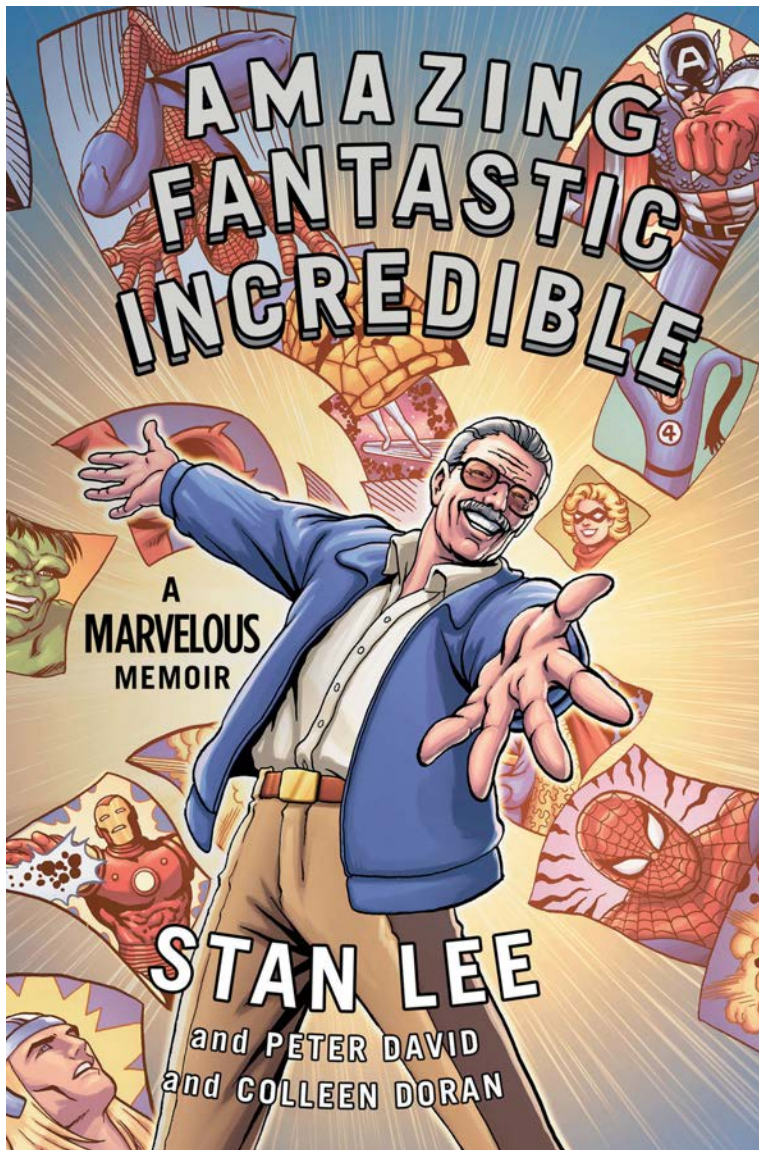
Ahh, the many shades of grey that proliferate through the opinions of die-hard Doctor Who fans. By the middle of the ninth series it was clear that either The Show had finally had its run, like 1989 all over again, that Jenna Louise Coleman couldn't act and Peter Capaldi was hideous and ineffectual... or, of course, their Tardis partnership was the best the series had been since RTD's initial reboot, with Capaldi the ultimate Timelord and Clara the ultimate companion.

Whatever your perception, the series' latter half is now available for you to either confirm its brilliance, or change your mind, and admit that it's brilliant. Was there ever a series conclusion as stand-alone masterful as Heaven Sent and Hell Bent? Just the Doctor's billions of years of purgatory before the Gallifrey return will always be remembered as a singular episode. Capaldi has given as fine a performance as any actor to jangle the Tardis' keys, and every tic and grandstanding speech adds value. Admittedly, with the death of Dr Who Confidential the discs are less extra-packed than we'd like, and the insertion of a few art cards doesn't make up for the depth of coverage of yore, but this swansong for Clara Oswald will still get plenty of play over the years.

☆☆☆☆

The second installment of series nine on Blu-ray and DVD has six episodes and stars The Zygons.





[BOOK]

## Amazing Fantastic Incredible: A Marvelous Memoir

£20 // AUTHOR, STAN LEE  
PUBLISHER, SIMON & SCHUSTER

We all owe a big round of applause to Stan Lee. Without him there would be no Spider-Man, Fantastic Four, X-Men, The Incredible Hulk, and so many other great characters and fantastic stories. Now he has turned his hand to a different kind of story – his own.

This is Stan Lee's autobiography, but in a comicbook form! From his early career with Timely Comics to spearheading the meteoric rise of Marvel, Stan Lee has had a blast throughout it all. He turned the world of comicbooks on its head by creating characters with a more human edge to them, moving beyond the pure superhero, perfect specimens of rival publishers. Stan's characters have flaws, with interesting personalities, and they share a universe that often brings them into conflict with each other.

The great successes of Stan's long career as writer and Editor are here to be celebrated, with help on the writing side from Peter David and excellent artwork created by Colleen Doran. We also get to see the sad moments too though, like losing a baby at birth. But in the words of the man himself, "Let's not dwell on it".



## DID YOU KNOW ABOUT STAN ASKING WHETHER GEORGE W BUSH WAS GOING TO KISS HIM? OR THAT HE HAD HIS OWN ACTION FIGURE

We all remember the celebrated cameos of Stan in the multitude of Marvel movies, often sending a cheer up in the cinema as fans keep an eagle eye out for it. But did you know about Stan asking whether George W Bush was going to kiss him? Or that he had his own action figure that was in fact Spider-Man under the clothes?

You can easily read the entire life of Stan Lee (so far) in one sitting, but the stories are presented in such an engaging way that you will just flick back and start all over again. This is a fantastic idea for a book, beautifully executed, we thoroughly recommend it for all super hero fans. Excelsior!

★★★★★





A dominating addition to anyone's geek desk, but the price will put many off a purchase.

[TOY]

## Aliens: Genocide Red Queen Mother Action Figure

\$99 (£65) //  
MAKER, NECA

You might have thought that buying the ultimate sleek black Xenomorph Queen for your Alien toy box was the final finishing touch your collection required – but it very much depends on how dogged you are in your obsession with the acid-spewing extra terrestrial franchise. Fans of the Alien comics know full well that out there in the least safe corners of the galaxy, there are species unknown to any other media, that also demand a place on your shelves.

The Ultra Deluxe Red Queen Mother, like a vast red dragon that inhabits distant planets rather than Wales, is instantly recognisable from Dark Horse's Alien: Genocide series. The figure is entirely in-keeping with NECA's Alien line, standing at 15" tall and 30" long, with over 30 points of articulation, including a mighty poseable tail, replaceable mouth parts (actually a bone of contention for some – what the hell are you supposed to do with tiny interchangeable model parts?).

Visually, it's true that you could pretty much make one of these Red Queens with one of the existing Queen figures and a bottle of red ink, but as we say – it depends on your level of devotion to the franchise. Check the price!

☆☆☆☆☆



[CARD GAME]

## Star Wars Timeline

£13 // 2-8 PLAYERS  
MAKER, ASMODEE

Timeline is a game where each card has an event in time printed on both sides, but only one side has the date. Players must place their cards in timeline order with the other cards played. Get it wrong and you lose! This idea is rife for branding, and this time it's Star Wars. It's a fun game that kids and adults can both enjoy, and a trip down memory lane as you reminisce about action packed scenes from the first six movies, and of course educate the younger generation of the importance of The Force.

☆☆☆☆☆



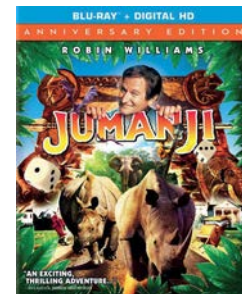
[BOOK]

## Rise of the Tomb Raider: The Official Art Book

£30 // AUTHOR, ANDY MCVITTIE  
PUBLISHER, TITAN BOOKS

Lara Croft's newest adventure may be an Xbox One exclusive (for a while), but long term fans of all persuasions will surely love this lavish art book which takes you behind the scenes of the making of the latest game. Featuring unseen concept art, 3D renders, sketches and meticulous developer commentary, it's a real insight into the resources required to build a modern gaming legend. The perfect companion to a series where the impressive environments have always been as much a star as Lara herself.

☆☆☆☆☆



[DVD]

## Jumanji: Anniversary Edition

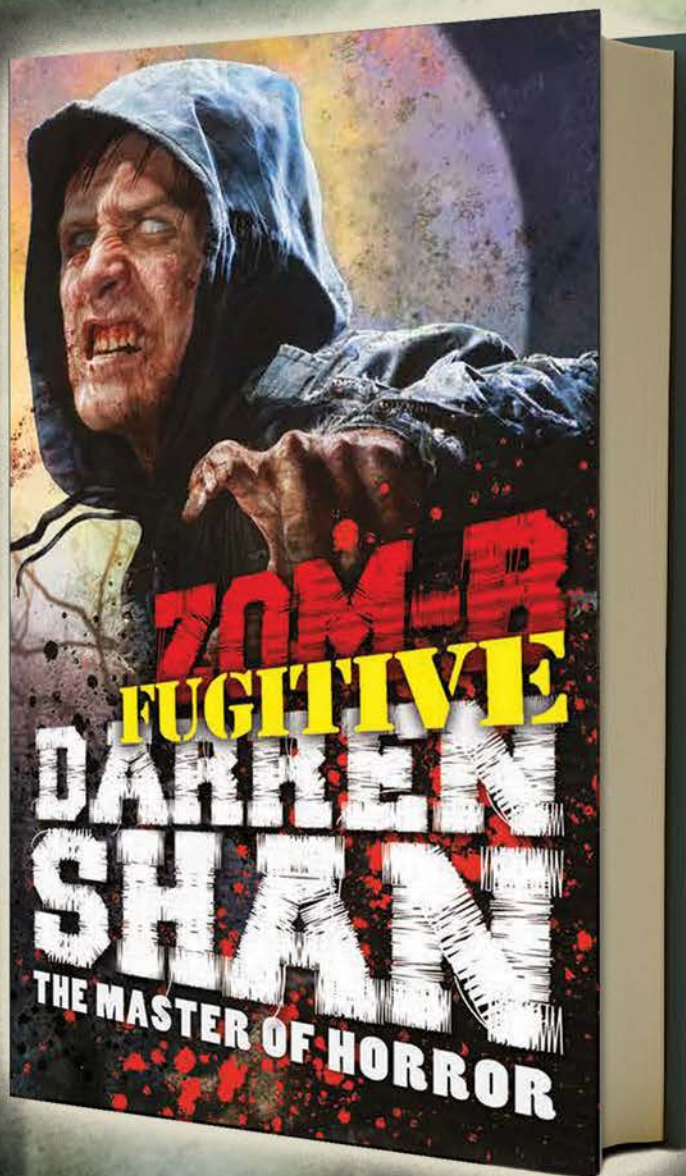
£20 // STARRING, ROBIN WILLIAMS  
STUDIO, SONY PICTURES

Come and get it, quick, before it's needlessly rebooted as a special metaphorical micturation on the grave of one of the finest comedians of the last Century! Yes, it's two decades since Robin Williams was saved from this jungle boardgame, as both the rudimentary CG effects and sight of little Kirsten Dunst brings home, so this crystal-clear new release represents the ultimate version of the movie you can own, until Sony remakes it with Russell Brand or whoever in the main role.

☆☆☆☆☆



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UNCOOKED MEDIA





**[GAME]**  
**Resident Evil Origins Collection**

£25 // PS4/XB1/PC  
PUBLISHER, CAPCOM

Dedicated Resident Evil fans know full well what they're getting here – it's not a new entry in the unkillable series, but a special boxset bringing together the brand new HD remasters of the original Resident Evil and the prequel Resident Evil Zero. There's been plenty of work done on both, with textures created from scratch for modern eyeballs – but you'll still need your rose-tinted spectacles on to really enjoy the animation stylings of the now twenty-year-old original game. Still a must-have.

☆☆☆☆☆



**[TOY]**  
**Bop It! R2D2**

£20 //  
MAKER, HASBRO

If you have never heard of the Bop It! range of handheld games from Hasbro, you may be a well-balanced adult with no kids. However, slap the Star Wars logo on it and suddenly it's a phenomenon we have to get to grips with. The idea is that audio cues are given out, and players have to obey them. This should be impossible with R2-D2 in charge, but thankfully C-3PO is on hand to translate all the 'Simon Says' style orders, so you'd better do what the gold freak tells you...

☆☆☆☆☆



**[COMIC]**  
**Doctor Who: The Eleventh Doctor Vol. 3: Conversion**

£15 // WRITERS, AL EWING & ROB WILLIAMS  
PUBLISHER, TITAN COMICS

You're not a true Doctor Who fan unless you've got a stash of these comic books under your pillow. This finale book of the Eleventh Doctor's adventures gathers issues 11 to 15 of the comic into one volume. The storylines are superb and the artwork really brings Matthew Smith to life on the page. You will find out the beginnings of SERVEYOUinc and learn of their devilish plans, witness an exploded TARDIS and discover the fates of The Doctor, Alice, Jones, and ARC. A thrilling read.

☆☆☆☆☆



**[GRAPHIC NOVEL]**  
**21st Century Tank Girl**

£17 // MULTIPLE WRITERS  
PUBLISHER, TITAN BOOKS

Tank Girl was an 80's icon. A surreal, anarchic, punk-influenced embodiment of counter culture and anti-establishment feeling. The original riot girl carried the flag for everything from new wave feminism, lesbianism, underpants and even opposition to the much hated Clause 24.

Now, after taking a break of nearly 20 years, when he provided the virtual likenesses of Gorillaz the virtual band he founded with Damon Albarn, artist Jamie Hewlett has returned to the landmark series. Also on board is original co-creator Alan Martin and they've re-invented Tank Girl for a new generation, indeed a new millennium of Millennials.

It's always a tough ask to revisit past glories, especially ones so influential, but Hewlett's work remains as fresh and challenging as ever and bubbles with the subversive wit of old. Tank Girl remains on top form and this is one 80's comic stalwart whose comeback we welcome with open arms.

☆☆☆☆☆



**[BLU-RAY]**  
**Halo: The Fall of Reach**

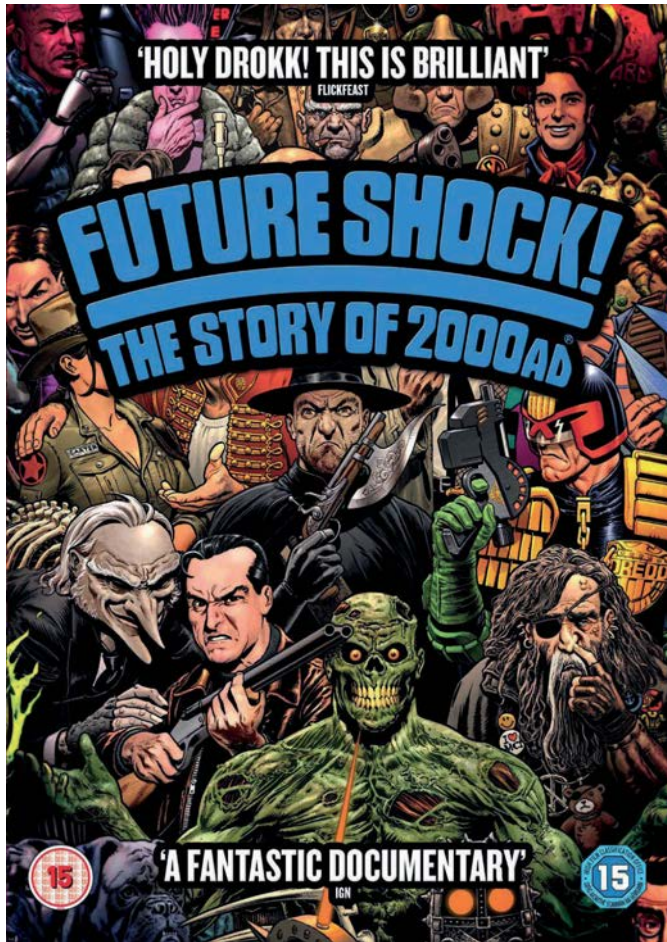
£10 // DIRECTOR, IAN KIRBY  
STUDIO, PLATFORM ENTERTAINMENT

Halo fans will know that we've already visited the fall of Reach once before, in the excellent Halo: Reach, Bungie's admirable and much underrated farewell to the series they created as flagship shooter for the original Xbox. But this hour-long animated feature is very much the product of 343 Industries, the team who has inherited Halo and who is now spearheading its launch on a new generation of hardware.

This is the origin story of John 117, the boy who would eventually grow up to become the Master Chief and his troubled relationship with his creator Doctor Halsey, who developed the Spartan programme. While much of the story and themes will be familiar to Halo veterans, this is still a decent, animated offering, providing a neat bridge between Halos old and new, much like Guardians' Hunt The Truth campaign. It's probably not absolutely essential viewing, but Halo completists will certainly enjoy this insight into the Master Chief's murky past and the genesis of the Spartans.

☆☆☆☆☆





Do you really want to know what goes on behind a publisher's doors? It's not pretty...

[DVD]

## Future Shock! The Story Of 2000 AD

£8 // DIRECTOR, PAUL GOODWIN  
STUDIO, METRODOME

Future Shock doesn't let up from the first montage of violent civil unrest in the Britain of the 1970s, up to the final squeal of thrash metal, accompanying exquisitely animated comic frames. And nor should it – 2000AD itself is still priding itself on its relentless 'action' (their preferred term for 'violence') nearly 40 years after the first issue.

This feature-length history is the no-holds-barred documentation of four decades of industry-changing artistry that the comic institution deserves. With famous names including Neil Gaiman, Pat Hills, Dave Gibbons, Grant Morrison and Karl Urban laying their devotion down on the line, the only viewpoint glaring in its absence is that of Alan Moore, and that's to be expected. The producers know their stuff, but they're not wizards.

2000AD has had a tumultuous existence, and it may be that many did not expect it to survive 16 years past its eponymous epoch, but Future Shock, while getting well and truly stuck into all the dirt in the comic's business history (there's plenty of balls-out expletive-filled honesty about how certain factions still feel about each other), makes a really strong case for the magnitude of the influence of Judge Dredd and others on the entire comics industry. From the 2000AD-fuelled dark turn taken by DC Comics in the late 80s, the through-line which boasts Watchmen as a crucial stepping stone, and the subsequent murky approach to comic book lore taken by Christopher Nolan and others, you're left with a proud suspicion that

this British institution has every right to consider itself on a par with the likes of Marvel and DC Comics.

Besides the worthy talking heads, the makers of this documentary have also managed to back this thesis up with extensive footage from a whole host of movies which have purloined inspiration from 2000AD over the years – there's

**THERE'S PLENTY OF BALLS-OUT  
EXPLETIVE-FILLED HONESTY  
ABOUT HOW CERTAIN FACTIONS  
STILL FEEL ABOUT EACH OTHER**

plenty of coverage of Stallone's 1995 Dredd movie, shown to a soundtrack of contributor after contributor pouring searing verbal manure over the entire production. On the other hand, although the 2012 movie is given a far more approving treatment, it would have been nice to see a bit more of it, and deeper insight into how it was more successful in translating the comic's unique brutality to the screen.

If nothing else, Future Shock delivers extreme thrills to the comic's thousands of fans all around the world – and will make the less devoted pick up a copy at the newsstand, linger over it and consider taking a copy home more than they otherwise would. Long may it last.

★★★★★





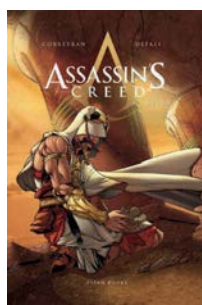


**[TOY]**  
**Terminator Genisys  
Endoskeleton 2\"**

£5 //  
MAKER, CAPCOM

What are Scalers? They're tiny little baby-headed geek icons, specially designed to cling onto headphone cords, and look slightly cute as they seem to abseil from your person. There's something undeniably wrong about a cute version of the steely naked Terminator, but as these two-inch-high dollies only cost a few quid, we wouldn't blame any lover of the movie series for finding a suitable corner of their dungeon to hang one or two of these delightful unstoppable killing machines.

☆☆☆☆



**[COMIC]**  
**Assassin's Creed – Leila, Vol. 6**

£9 // WRITERS, ERIC CORBEYRAN & DJILALLI  
DEFALI // MAKER, HASBRO

The team behind Leila are bande dessinée (that particular Franco-Belgian comic style) veterans who have turned their attentions to Assassin's Creed. Modern assassin Jonathan Hawk seeks the Sceptre of Aset stolen by his mysterious ancestor seven centuries ago, but this quest ultimately leads to a climactic showdown between the Assassins and Templars. An intriguing script and some delightful artwork from Defali make this a satisfying and suitably epic conclusion to Creed's Egyptian cycle.

☆☆☆☆



**[BOOK]**  
**Brian Blessed: Absolute  
Pandemonium**

£20 // WRITER, BRIAN BLESSED  
PUBLISHER, SIDGWICK & JACKSON

This may not be Brian's first autobiography, but how can one book contain such a creature? Whether he's securing immortal places in fandom as Boss Nass in Star Wars or Prince Vultan in Flash Gordon, scaling mountains while swearing his ambition to reach the moon, or just reducing everyone to perturbed hilarity as himself, there's more to this unique octogenarian than can ever be squeezed into one book – but what you do get in this astonishing narrative is worth every paragraph.

☆☆☆☆



The attention to geeky detail that has gone into the packaging is superb. Especially the Sinclair debossed polystyrene box!

**[BOOK]**  
**Sinclair ZX Spectrum:  
A Visual Compendium**

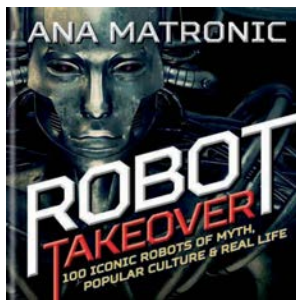
£28/£50 COLLECTOR'S EDITION // 2 PLAYERS  
PUBLISHER, BITMAP BOOKS

One of the most amazing things about gaming, and something completely unforeseen back in the computer games heyday of the 1980s, is that every year that goes by the love for the old games just grows and grows. At the time gamers were clamouring for the latest new devices and leaps forward in graphics and sound technology, casting aside the games that they had enjoyed as kids. Fast forward thirty years though and these gamers are now over 40 and in a reflective mood. That's where Bitmap Books comes in. Powered by the jolt that Kickstarter allows, Sam Dyer has created a treasure trove of Spectrum pixel ponderings. The book looks back over some of the most groundbreaking ZX Spectrum games of all time, with the reminiscences of programmers, fans and game journalists of the day.

The content hits the right note, while tantalisingly and inevitably never going into enough detail to satisfy the most die-hard fans – that would take a coffee table of books. Where Bitmap Books has really excelled though is in the packaging of the Collector's Edition. The red, yellow, green and blue stripes of the Spectrum are bound in as ribbons and the book comes in a debossed Sinclair logo polystyrene box. A lot of thought and love for the Spectrum has gone into this. A Geeky Monkey Smash!

☆☆☆☆





**[BOOK]**  
**Robot Takeover**

£15 // WRITER, ANA MATRONIC  
PUBLISHER, OCTOPUS BOOKS

Who knew the female lead of the Scissor Sisters had a thing for robots? The techno tattoo on her arm was a giveaway, but this love has morphed into a fascinating book. It's a Top 100, but Ana has not only included the robots of pop culture, but also robots of the future, as yet uninvented! Each is written about with passion and insight, plus some great photos to reminisce over. Our favourites? Marvin in here along with Kryten and Darth, but we will always have a soft spot for The Replicants.

☆☆☆☆☆



**[GAME]**  
**LEGO Dimensions Level Pack:  
Back To The Future**

£28 // WiiU/PS3/PS4/360/XB1  
PUBLISHER, WARNER BROS INTERACTIVE

Ever wondered what LEGO stands for? It's License To Print Money. The words are obviously different in Danish. At £28 a pop these LEGO Dimensions level packs are pricey when you've already dished out £80 for the starter pack, but the figures and content included are undeniably good. With this you get a full Hill Valley open world to play around in, a DeLorean and Hover Board to build and upgrade and Marty has a special Sonar Smash move with his guitar. Great Scott it's fun!

☆☆☆☆☆



**[TOY]**  
**DC Comics Icons:  
Green Arrow**

£25 //  
MAKER, DC COMICS

Here's a smart innovation from DC – action figures that are specifically inspired by iconic comic covers of yore. Green Arrow has had many looks over his 75 years of existence, but the Longbow era was unquestionably the most Robin Hood-like design of all, so this smart release has the added bonus of working well as a Robin Hood action figure at the same time, if you prefer your superheroes to have several centuries' vintage behind them, rather than decades. Recommended on both counts.

☆☆☆☆☆

©DC ENTERTAINMENT



**[DVD]**  
**Fantastic Four**

£10 // STARRING KATE MARA & MILES TELLER  
STUDIO, 20TH CENTURY FOX

The Fantastic Four are the problem child of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. After two pretty bland if reasonably enjoyable earlier offerings in the mid-2000s (from which Chris Evans' Human Torch promptly decamped to become Captain America), comes a third and entirely unnecessary reboot, which attempts to gain the FF a foothold in fans' affections.

The problem is we've been spoiled by some great MCU movies and this is quite simply not one of them. Directors disowning their own film after the studio takes over is never a good sign and it also wastes four decent young actors (especially Kate Mara), in a pedestrian outing whose temperature never rises above the distinctly tepid. Dull, overly serious and lacking any of the wit or spark needed to reinvigorate a largely unloved franchise, this has contractual obligation written all over it. An approval rating of just 10% on some of the movie sites is a telling indictment – even if you're a serious Fantastic Four fan, this is best avoided.

☆☆☆☆☆



**[TOY]**  
**Pop! Star Wars: Darth Vader**

£8 //  
MAKER, FUNKO

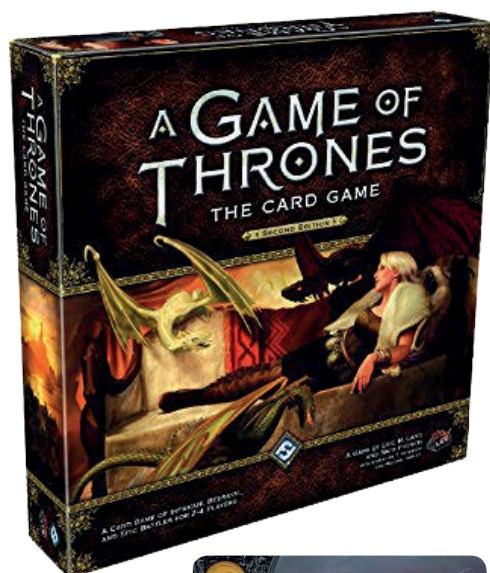
There's no denying the power of the cute side and that's exactly what's most appealing about Funko's brand new Darth Vader Bobble Head. Packaging is good and the build quality high, and there's even a separate stand for your new acquisition, though he's also perfectly capable of standing on his own two feet.

This Vader is sculpted in a slightly strange squatting pose that might put some collectors off, and Funko's style of placing a model's eyes quite wide apart doesn't quite work so well, as it does for the human figures in this collection.

Yet that 001 number, iconic black outfit and red lightsaber are very much in evidence and there's something incredibly satisfying and compelling about watching Vader's helmet wobble and bobble about as you daydream in the office. If you've always wanted a desktop Dark Lord of the Sith, then this will adequately fit the bill and there's infinite amusement value in setting him off and having Vader nod-endorse even your most questionable decisions.

☆☆☆☆☆





Well now that we know Jon Snow is alive, I feel happier playing his card.



[CARD GAME]

## A Game of Thrones: The Card Game Second Edition

£27 // 2 PLAYERS  
MAKER, FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES

There's nothing quite like it, is there? Repair to the snug fireside of your nearest inn with a group of like-minded fantasy fans, draw and deal the cards, then all strip naked and mutilate each other's genitals in the spirit of George RR Martin. It's what Game of Thrones fandom is all about.

Those of a more retiring nature may have just played the first instalment of the card game fully clothed and with genitals intact, but however you played, this second instalment will require a slight shakeup of gameplay. It's still a game of 2-4 players in which you represent one of the great houses of Westeros, and battle to take charge of the Iron Throne, but this time there are two more factions, and greatly simplified rules, timing options and, all in all, a better entry point for newbies to the card version of everyone's favourite pervy HBO saga (or rather, the original Song of Ice & Fire books, as the artwork by-passes the TV version entirely).

Fantasy Flight are wise to have opened up the game further, as Game of Thrones has achieved a popularity way beyond your usual circle of Magic: The Gathering experts, and there can be no better way of indoctrinating them into the excitement of fantasy card gaming than with this pack.

☆☆☆☆☆



[BLU-RAY]

## Dragon Ball Z Kai Season 4 (Episodes 78-98)

£30 // DIRECTOR, YASUHIRO NOWATARI  
STUDIO, MANGA ENTERTAINMENT

Dragon Ball Z's adventures have proved a delight for anime and comic fans and as it reaches season four, Goku shocks the world by announcing his retirement. With series villain Cell reaching his now near perfect form, that leaves young Gohan all alone to defend Earth against the monster. Will Goku shake off his lethargy to lend Gohan strength for one final Kamehameha Wave? Dragon Ball Z fans will no doubt be queuing up to find the answer in yet another colourful blast of amazing animanga.

☆☆☆☆☆



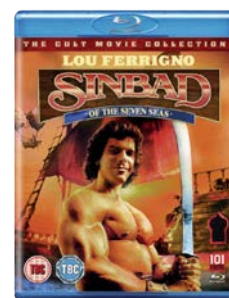
[DVD]

## Doctor Who: The 10 Christmas Specials

£33 // STARRING, DAVID TENNANT, MATT SMITH, PETER CAPALDI // STUDIO, BBC

We go on sale 24 December, so there's a slim chance you might read this before the big day! If not, this limited edition pack from the BBC is well worth spending your Christmas money from Auntie Heather on. The collector's editions are individually numbered, come with a set of five special Doctor Who Christmas cards and pack the ten special episodes onto four discs, plus a bonus feature presented by Rufus Hound and a booklet of Doctor Who info. Settle down with the Quality Street and get stuck in!

☆☆☆☆☆



[BLU-RAY]

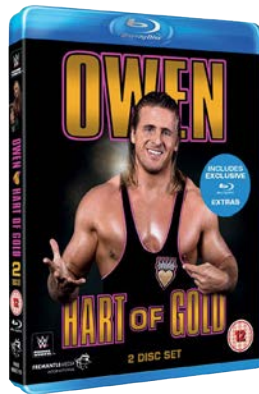
## Sinbad of the Seven Seas

£12 // STARRING, LOU FERRIGNO  
STUDIO, 101 FILMS

Lou Ferrigno was an incredible Hulk, thrilling kids as the alter ego of Bruce Banner in the cult TV series. Yet even his biggest fans would concede he's not exactly leading man material. Ferrigno's Sinbad is based on an Edgar Allan Poe short story and while enjoyable enough, Ferrigno's dialogue is dubbed and the whole thing is marred by a creaky narrative device. It's part of The Cult Movie Collection, and that probably tells you everything you need to know. One for dedicated Ferrigno fans only.

☆☆☆☆☆





**HART OF GOLD HOWEVER, STILL PLAYS AS AN AFFECTIONATE TRIBUTE TO ONE OF THE MOST BELOVED PERFORMERS OF HIS GENERATION**

**[BLU-RAY]**

## **WWE: Owen Hart Of Gold**

£25

STUDIO, FREMANTLE HOME ENTERTAINMENT

It's unfortunate that Owen Hart's tragic May 1999 death still casts a shadow over a DVD and Blu-ray release which supposedly celebrates his life and illustrious 16-year career. Without the approval of Owen's widow Martha though, it isn't possible to consider this a definitive effort, and some certainly do regard it as exploitative. Hart of Gold however, still plays as an affectionate tribute to one of the most beloved performers of his generation.

The documentary included is compelling, if hardly comprehensive. Clocking in meekly at just over 70 minutes, it provides viewers with entertaining stories, but knowledgeable fans may find themselves unsatisfied. As with Owen's career; the real selling point of this release is the actual action.

19 bouts are present, including early collisions with Curt Hennig and Shawn Michaels, alongside genuine classics such as Owen's technical masterclass in Germany with Davey Boy Smith to crown the first ever WWE European Champion. More casual fans will be tempted by the raucous atmosphere during the famously thrilling tag team main event of Canadian Stampede or the brother versus brother masterpiece that he and Bret contested at Wrestlemania.

★★★★★



# THE MOST HELACIOUS MATCHES & THE BEST OF THE REST!

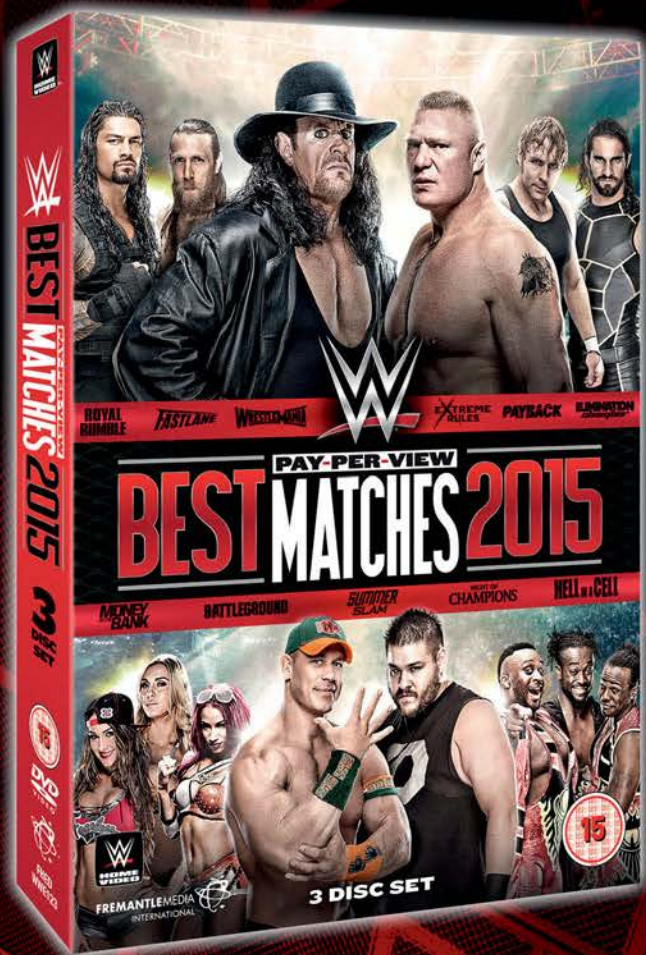
## **HELL IN A CELL 2015**



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Terms and Conditions apply. See Amazon.co.uk for details.



## MEGA MACHINE

# BLUE THUNDER

AN LA COP, A HIGH-TECH EXPERIMENTAL CHOPPER – IT COULD ONLY BE THE 1980S...

For kids growing up in the late Seventies and early Eighties, Roy Scheider was 'da man'. First he was the guy who killed Jaws (twice), then in 1983 he got to fly Blue Thunder – the coolest helicopter ever. Don't mention Airwolf. Don't even go there. You're wrong before you even start.

Blue Thunder's story was some typical Eighties hokum of a super helicopter developed for the Los Angeles PD to provide air support and surveillance. So what made it so cool? Well, it was a total stealth 'copter. When 'whisper mode' mode was engaged, which made the engines virtually silent, it was almost impossible to detect. It had a high zoom camera that was excellent for ogling boobs, and powerful listening equipment that enabled it to monitor conversations going on inside buildings while Blue Thunder hovered silently outside. That's not the cool stuff though. The cool stuff is the dirty great Gatling gun mounted in the nose, the super-charged engine and the fact that it looks devastatingly badass. The gun was linked directly to the pilot's helmet and would point at whatever the pilot was looking at, similar to the Target Acquisition and Designation System (TADS) used by Apache gunships. However, in Blue Thunder it was called the Harrison Fire Control System in tribute to a member of the prop design team.

Blue Thunder used an Aerospatiale SA-341G Gazelle as a base and you can clearly see this from the engine exhaust and completely unmodified tail section. The front is a different matter. The Gazelle's bubble canopy was completely replaced by a new canopy more reminiscent of the Apache, along with various other embellishments to enhance its mean appearance. Ironically, the modifications were so heavy they made the helicopter slow and very unmanoeuvrable. Various camera trickery had to be employed to make it appear fast and nimble, when it very much wasn't. The loop manoeuvre in the big finale was actually performed by a 1/6th scale remote controlled model.

With such a great creation as the star, perfectly supported by the ever-cool Scheider and a young Daniel Stern as JAFO (just another fucking observer), written by Dan O'Bannon who wrote the screenplay for Alien and directed with verve John Badham, whose previous work included Saturday Night Fever and who would go on to direct the classic War Games a year later, Blue Thunder was a great action movie. It even inspired a short-lived TV series that ran for 11 episodes. The movie has become somewhat lost in the ether, but if you fancy a slice of unashamed and unapologetic Eighties action, dig it out. You won't be disappointed, and you'll secretly wish you were Roy Scheider. **GM**







From epic machine to rusty theme park prop – Blue Thunder is worth celebrating as an 80's classic.



## WHERE IS THE THUNDER NOW?

Three Blue Thunders were created for the movie – two flying versions and a static model for close up shots. The two airworthy choppers were bought by a New Mexico aviation salvage collector and eventually scrapped and sold off for parts, which is pretty gutting. The static prop was a feature on the backlot tour of Disney's Hollywood Studios, Florida for some time, but its condition deteriorated over the years and it was eventually removed from the tour around 2005, looking a bit rusty.





## BECAUSE JAPAN

**Words: JONATHAN CLEMENTS**

Jonathan is the author of *Anime: A History* and *Modern Japan: All That Matters*



## The Shoulders of Giants

BATTER-UP! IT'S TIME TO CLEANSE THE EARTH OF THE HUMANIDS...

It has been a hundred years since humanity was first devastated by the Titans – hulking, skinless man-eating giants. What remains of the human race huddles behind a series of concentric walls under martial law, the best and brightest co-opted into one of several military organisations that use repurposed climbing equipment to scale the enemy attackers in search of their hard-to-find weak spot. Teenage brawler Eren Yeager swears to avenge his mother's death at the hands of the Titans and joins up, along with a group of his friends, only to discover that the mystery of the Titans' appearance and motivations runs far deeper, and closer to home, than he previously imagined.

With more than 30 million copies in print worldwide, *Attack on Titan* is one of those manga that has truly escaped from the ghetto. Its US sales run rings around many supposedly “popular” superhero comics, and its fans are a rabid, visible costumed presence wherever geeks gather. Hajime Isayama's original manga has been adapted into an animated series, novels and a computer game, which is pretty good going for something that looks on the surface like the fever-dream of someone off his face at a Bodyworks exhibit.

*Attack on Titan* has truly caught the zeitgeist both in Japan and abroad. Local audiences warmed to its allegorical Wall of Fear, as a symbol of the social and cultural barriers that often continue to shut Japan off from the troubles of the real world... at least temporarily. Similar symbolism can be found in recent anime like *Summer Wars* and *Howl's Moving Castle*, both of which dealt obliquely with modern Japan's reliance on the pursuance of faraway conflicts, and the revelation that terror could still hit close to home. Viewers in Hong Kong praised it as an inadvertent metaphor for the influence of the overbearing colossus of mainland China on their lives. Newspapers in South Korea touted the whole enterprise as a propaganda exercise in encouraging young Japanese to support military expansion. The story is so surreal that it lends itself to any number of political messages, not least a winner with young teens who feel that the perils of the world are all coming to get them. It is a zombie apocalypse and a monster-of-the-week disaster





movie all in one, leavened with a healthy scepticism about the lies that the authorities might tell to hang onto power. Plus big fights.

The Attack on Titan live-action movies are an intriguing confection. They seemingly went into production for the same reason as any other comics or media adaptation – out of a managerial confidence that high sales in one medium would translate into another. But the original choice as director, Tetsuya Nakashima, dropped out in 2012 over unspecified conflicts regarding the script. His replacement, Shinji Higuchi, must have looked like an all-round jackpot, not only for his track record in the liminal area of modern sci-fi and cross-media ties, but for his highly regarded work in tokusatsu movies – special effects epics about big monsters stomping on buildings.

Higuchi has always been very good at “quoting” elements of a much-loved original. Over-emoting is common in anime that lack the resources to convey visual expressions, but in the live-action Attack on Titan, the characters routinely strike ludicrous poses and spout gung-ho dialogue that seems, well, cartoony. Meanwhile, whereas the original is set in a European dreamtime, all the actors in the movies are understandably Asian, which makes a mockery of a particular subplot about the “last” Japanese girl in the world.

I was recently taken to task by a viewer at the Scotland Loves Anime film festival for not introducing the live-action movies with sufficient respect. Apparently it was my fault that the audience was laughing at the hokier moments and protesting at some of the switches in plot and character. Then again, another punter commented that the live-action movies were a fantastically enjoyable, funny parody of the anime, although nobody seemed to have told the cast and crew. So the live-action movies aren't quite the re-up that fans were hoping for. They take themselves seriously in all the wrong ways, seemingly unaware that, ironically, it's the earlier cartoon incarnation that really hits the right note.

**Attack on Titan is out now from Animatsu.**



## HIDDEN FORTRESS

With a new Star Wars film on the horizon, it's worth noting that Attack on Titan director Shinji Higuchi has form here, too. In 2008 he helmed a modern remake of Kurosawa's Hidden Fortress, famously regarded as one of George Lucas's main inspirations. Higuchi's version approached the samurai era like a Star Wars drinking game, throwing in as many references as humanly possible, including a musical score that quotes John Williams' "Force" theme, a Vaderesque baddie and a chase sequence in a mineshaft, shot from above to evoke Luke Skywalker's attack on the Death Star.





# TECH KNOW

THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY // THE COOLEST GADGETS



## Music Streaming Services

With the launch of Apple Music this year, there's now more choice than ever when it comes to picking a music streaming service. And with cross-platform compatibility, you're no longer limited to specific services – unless you own a Blackberry, obviously. That means that you can run Apple Music on an Android device, Google Play on an Apple one, and Spotify on just about anything. Each one has its pros and cons, so we plugged in to testdrive them all. We bring you the definitive guide to picking exactly the right music streaming service for your tastes and your needs.

### Apple Music

PRICE, £9.99 PER MONTH // LIBRARY, 30M SONGS  
// QUALITY, 256KBPS AAC // FORMATS, iOS/ANDROID

**DEALS:** You get three months free when you sign up.

**PROS:** Firstly, the three-month trial is generous enough to give you plenty of time to get used to the service and work out if it's for you or not. A discounted rate for family members means that up to six people can all sign into the account and have their own downloads and playlists.

**CONS:** The lower bitrate for songs means that serious audiophiles won't get the same level of quality of some of the other services available. Also, don't presume that the entire iTunes library is available to you, as although there are 30 million songs on Apple Music, there are plenty more on iTunes. The Beatles tracks, for example, aren't currently available to stream through the service.

### Spotify

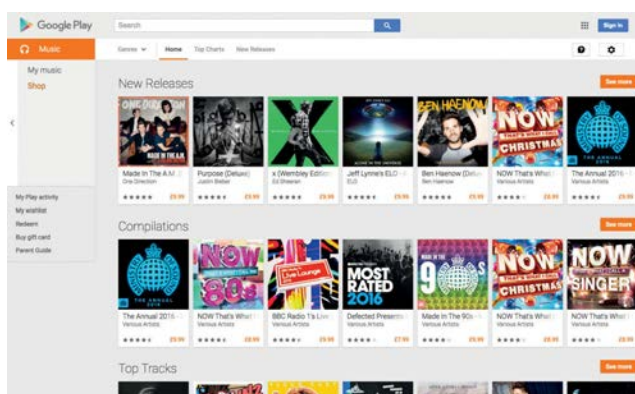
PRICE, £9.99 PER MONTH // LIBRARY, 30M SONGS  
// QUALITY, 320KBPS OGG // FORMATS, iOS/ANDROID/  
BLACKBERRY/WINDOWS PHONE/PLAYSTATION/WEB PLAYER

**DEALS:** Students get 50% off, everyone else gets it free for one month.

**PROS:** Spotify is still the default music streaming service for most of us, and for good reason. It's available on practically every format out there, the quality is impressive and there's plenty of exclusive content, radio stations and themed playlists to browse through when you get bored of your own music library.

**CONS:** Considering the popularity of Spotify, it's slightly disappointing that there isn't an option to listen to lossless tracks. It can also be hard to navigate through the software's numerous playlists to find what you want, and organising playlists can sometimes be tricky.





## Google Play Music

PRICE, £9.99 PER MONTH // LIBRARY, 35M SONGS  
// QUALITY, 320KBPS MP3 // FORMATS, iOS/ANDROID/WEB

**DEALS:** Get a Galaxy S6 contract through Carphone Warehouse for three months free.

**PROS:** Although it's not dripping with as many features as some of the services in this list, top marks have to go to Google Play Music for the cleanness of its software and overall ease of use. Finding your music is simplicity itself, and the ability to upload your music library to the software means that you'll easily be able to have all your music in one place.

**CONS:** Google Play Music is very much a service for the casual user, which is both a pro and a con. Serious music fans looking for finely tuned recommendations and more expanded services might want to look at service like Tidal, for example.



## Deezer

PRICE, £9.99 PER MONTH/£14.99 ELITE // LIBRARY, 35M SONGS  
// QUALITY, 320KBPS MP3 // FORMATS, iOS/ANDROID/  
BLACKBERRY/WEB PLAYER

**DEALS:** Deezer is free to some EE customers and free to anyone else for one month.

**PROS:** Deezer, like Spotify, comes with Facebook integration, meaning that you can see what your friends are listening to. It also has a powerful range of music discovery tools, so if you're looking for some new artists to listen to then Deezer's recommendations are often spot-on. The 'Hear This' recommendation option is very well done, with live sessions and picks from Deezer staff.

**CONS:** It's not as well supported as some of the other services in this round-up, and the interface isn't quite as intuitive as, say, Google Play Music.



## Tidal

PRICE, £9.99 PER MONTH/£19.99 PREMIUM // LIBRARY, 25M  
SONGS // QUALITY, 1,411KBPS FLAC, 320KBPS AAC  
// FORMATS, iOS/ANDROID/WEB PLAYER

**DEALS:** None.

**PROS:** Tidal is all about the quality. Sign up for their premium service and you can listen to music in near-perfect quality. If you're serious about your music, and have the playback equipment to do it justice, then Tidal may well be the best option.

**CONS:** The library isn't as large as some of its rivals, meaning that there's a surprisingly large amount of well-known artists that aren't on there. Also some may grumble about having to pay up to £19.99 a month just to get the high-quality tracks, but it's worth noting that if you pay more for the service, the artists you're listening to get higher royalty payments, too.

## AND THE WINNER IS...

Well, typically there isn't just one winner. If you're looking for all-round useability, track selection and an intuitive user interface then you're probably going to want to go for Spotify or Google Play Music. Apple's smaller selection of tracks and lower sound quality puts it nearer the bottom of the list, but the three-month trial might be enough to tempt many users. If sound quality is your deciding factor though, then we would recommend Deezer or Tidal.





# New Year Revelations

You may have cursed the unoriginality of your relatives for giving you cash instead of a thoughtful gift this Christmas, but now you have the delicious dilemma of what to spend it on. You could wander around the sales in the freezing cold desperately looking for something [anything] to throw your money at. Or you could do the wise thing, stay at home in the warm and take our frankly incredible advice on the best things to spend it on.



**THE VEGA HAS THE FULL  
ENDORSEMENT OF SIR CLIVE  
SINCLAIR HIMSELF BEHIND IT**

## ZX Spectrum Vega

PRICE, £100 // [RETRO-COMPUTERS.CO.UK](http://RETRO-COMPUTERS.CO.UK)

Those of a certain age will remember how important the ZX Spectrum was to gaming in the 80s. Cheap, (moderately) powerful and capable of running full-colour graphics (as long as you didn't want more than two colours in an 8x8 square), the Spectrum was a stunning piece of kit, and had the software library to back it up. Now, thanks to a successful

Kickstarter campaign and the support of Sir Clive Sinclair himself, the Spectrum is back in the shape of the ZX Spectrum Vega. With a console controller meets rubber keyboard hybrid design, the Vega comes with around 1,000 games preinstalled and the ability to store any additional ones you download via its built-in memory. The majority of the games may be a little clunky, but there are enough classics among the 1,000 to recommend checking it out.

## Raspberry Pi 2

PRICE, £30 // [WWW.RASPBERRYPI.ORG](http://WWW.RASPBERRYPI.ORG)

Incredibly, the Raspberry Pi Foundation has sold around six million of their £30 computers, and although they come without a keyboard, monitor, mouse or even a case, the latest Raspberry Pi 2 Model B version does come with a 900MHz quad-core CPU, 1GB RAM, 4 USB ports, a Micro SD slot and even a HDMI port. Designed to help schoolchildren in the

UK to learn about coding and computers, and developing countries learn about computer science, they're surprisingly fun to play around with – and you can even get a version of Minecraft for it.



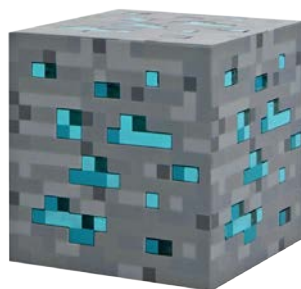




## Google Cardboard

PRICE, £3 //  
GOOGLE.COM/GET/CARDBOARD

If you've got one of those senile old aunts who still thinks she's pushing the boat out if she Sellotapes a couple of pound coins into a Christmas card, then this might be the best way to spend it. The Google Cardboard isn't going to change the way you view the world, but it is a great introduction to the VR capabilities of modern smartphones. You assemble the basic cardboard model, attach your phone and then, through one of a number of compatible apps, you can view or interact with a 360-degree 3D world just by tilting your head. Science fiction come alive!



## Minecraft lamp

PRICE, £20 //  
MINECRAFT.NET/STORE

If you've never played Minecraft then these lamps will mean little to you, but anyone who has spent the odd hour or two strip-mining a ravine searching for diamonds will love it. The lamp comes in two flavours (Diamond and Redstone), has three strengths of light, is battery powered and can be turned on or off with a simple tap. At 3-inches square, it's not exactly large, but it does give off a surprisingly large amount of light and is very well made. Mojang don't let just anyone make Minecraft merchandise, so you know what you get is always top quality.



## WLTL V666 Quadcopter

PRICE, £125 //  
WLTOYS.EU

Drones people would have you believe that every home should have one, even if you're not entirely sure why you'd want one! Try one out though, and we guarantee you'll be hooked. Part remote-controlled helicopter and part aerial videocamera, you'll start by videoing your roof and chasing the cat around the garden, cutting movies that wouldn't look out of place in Apocalypse Now. As with everything electronic, the more you pay the better the quality – in this case, more money gives you better stability and camera, but drones are enormous fun.



## JBL Flip 2

PRICE, £80 //  
UK.JBL.COM

Is your geek den still void of a quality portable Bluetooth speaker? Then you might be surprised at just how good a small speaker can be. At a penny short of £80, there are much cheaper speakers out there than the JBL Flip 2, but if you're looking for excellent sound quality at a reasonable price, they don't come much better than this. It packs two 40mm drivers that are driven by 6W amplifiers and a bass port that does its best to give you a beefier sound than its size would suggest. Just pair it with your favourite device and you'll soon have your beats blaring.



## Fitbit Charge

PRICE, £65 //  
FITBIT.COM/UK/CHARGE

Those with a conscience and a habitual problem with excess at Christmas might want to begin 2016 with the aim of shedding a few pounds – weight and money. You could pay for gym or invest in a bike and a Lycra suit, but we recommend starting with a wristband that monitors all your physical activity – and one of the best has to be the Fitbit Charge. It uses an accelerometer to measure motion patterns to determine the amount of steps you've taken, the calories burned and the distance travelled. It can even tell you how many stairs you've climbed, too.

## Binatone Brick

PRICE, £20 //  
MEETTHEBRICK.COM/UK

As smartphones get to the point where they're overtaking the intelligence of the human race, one company has decided that it's much cooler to go old-school and are doing their very best to get us all walking around with a 1980's style brick phone. The Binatone Brick costs around £20 and can either take a SIM card or be used as a Bluetooth handset linked to your 'proper' mobile. Its built-in speaker can be used to play music via Bluetooth, and it comes with an LED torch built in, one game (Snake – well what else?) and a whopping up to three months of standby time! You'll be the envy of your 80's yuppie mates, who are now fat and over 40.





# TOP GEAR

YOUR ROUND UP OF THE HOTTEST NEW TECH, SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED  
TO INCREASE YOUR HEART RATE AND LOWER YOUR BANK BALANCE



## Google Nexus 6P

£500 // [STORE.GOOGLE.COM](http://STORE.GOOGLE.COM) // AVAILABLE: NOW

While the 6-inch Nexus 6 was a good (if oversized) phablet, the slightly trimmer 6P, is a belter. Built by Huawei, one of the rising stars of the smartphone world, the 6P is packed with features – a 12.3 megapixel camera, USB-C charging, a full metal case and front-facing stereo speakers. It may not have the wow factor of the iPhone 6 or Galaxy Edge, but if you're looking for a larger smartphone that's, well, a bit smarter than the rest, then the 6P could well be your new favourite phone.



## Moto 360

£210 // [MOTOROLA.COM](http://MOTOROLA.COM) // AVAILABLE: NOW

While the first generation of smartwatches failed to impress everyone, it's clear that the manufacturers have listened to feedback and (mostly) improved them in their second incarnation. One such device is Motorola's Moto 360, which despite being one of the best-selling smartwatches, failed on a few counts – poor battery life being one of them. The new version comes in two sizes (for male and female wrists), a better screen and larger memory, but the battery still underperforms unfortunately.



## Samsung Galaxy View

\$600 [UK TBA] // [SAMSUNG.COM](http://SAMSUNG.COM) // AVAILABLE: TBA

Samsung is usually the first company to launch a product into a niche market, and the Galaxy View is definitely niche. Clocking in at a cent under \$600 in the US, it's a 1080p 18.4-inch tablet designed to act as a portable TV, streaming TV and movies from downloaded apps. Complete with a built-in carrying handle, the Galaxy View could quite possibly be the best way to watch TV and movies in a portable fashion, but just don't expect the same quality screen as you'll find on Samsung smartphones.



## Hisense ULED TV

£2400 // [HISENSE.CO.UK](http://HISENSE.CO.UK) // AVAILABLE: TBA

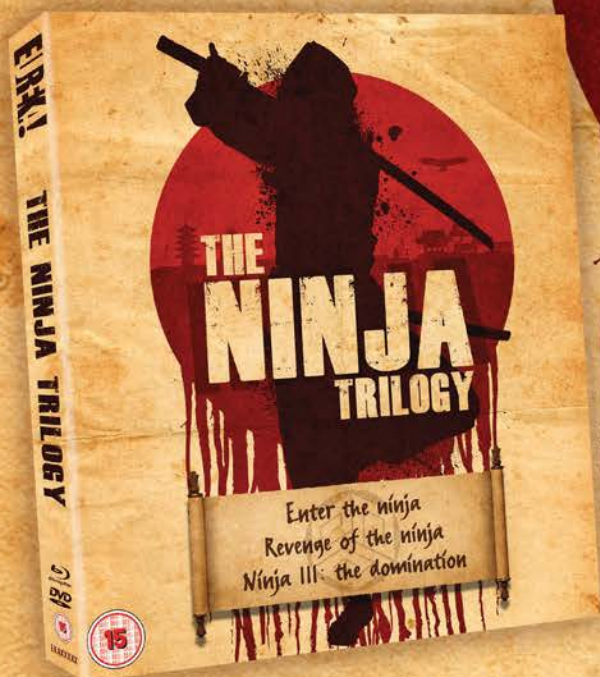
Curved OLED TVs are becoming the drooling item to lust after for those with tech-related desires and capacious wallets, but while the (admittedly impressive) OLED TVs are out of most people's price bracket, Hisense claim that their proprietary ULED system offers the same quality display at OLED, but at a reduced price. Tests show that the two are very similar, and although their upcoming 65" curved set will still set you back nearly £2,500, it's still considerably cheaper than its OLED rivals.



**THREE FILMS  
STRAIGHT FROM THE  
CANNON VAULTS**

Enter the Ninja  
Revenge of the Ninja  
Ninja III The Domination

**SPECIAL EDITION FIVE-DISC  
BLU-RAY AND DVD BOX SET  
COMING THIS JANUARY**



# THE NINJA TRILOGY



GALAXIAN THAT YOU CAN PLAY ON YOUR LAP? WHAT KIND OF SCIENCE FICTION MAGIC IS THIS?

## REMEMBERING...

# ASTRO WARS

You Tube  
**GEEKY  
MONKEY TV**

**CATCH MORE RETRO  
TOYS IN ACTION ON THE  
GEEKY MONKEY TV  
YOUTUBE CHANNEL!**

### WTF IS ASTRO WARS?

It's a portable electronic shoot-'em-up game loosely based on the arcade game Galaxian, which was basically a Space Invaders clone with the additional element of enemy ships that peel away from the main fleet and dive bomb your ship. You can move left and right across the bottom of the screen using a two-direction control stick, avoiding incoming bullets and ships. There are four skill levels with the ultimate goal being to reach 9,999 points, at which point you win the game and get a groovy little victory tune for your trouble.

### WHY DID YOU WANT IT?

Because it looks like an actual arcade machine! In the world of video games in 1981, the arcade was king, and Space Invaders and Galaxian were the A-list shooters of the day. The idea that you could have a Galaxian arcade machine of your very own was pretty mind-blowing to kids at the time, and Astro Wars seemed to offer that with its coin-op stylings and full-colour 'graphics'.

### IS IT AS AWESOME AS YOU REMEMBER?

Inevitably it's not quite the full-on arcade experience you might have hoped for. To be fair, even back in the day, in terms of gameplay, it wasn't a classic and traded on the coin-op-style design to get kids dreaming. Gameplay is simplistic, as you can imagine, and due to the limitations of the technology and the size of the screen display there are fewer aliens than you get in the real Galaxian. That doesn't mean it's not challenging however. Playing at the highest of the four skill settings will test any player's mettle, although slightly sluggish controls are as much a challenge to overcome as the relentless onslaught of the alien hordes.

It's also very loud. Don't think you can sit and play it on the sofa well others watch TV. A volume control or an option to turn the sound off completely would have been a very good idea. Despite its limitations, Astro Wars is one of the better standalone electronic games of its era. It's still playable enough, and the magnified, illuminated display actually looks really good, if a little cramped.

### CAN I GET ONE?

As always, eBay is the place to go. A boxed, working game will cost anywhere between £35 and £100. Any more than that and you're getting seriously ripped off. Check the description to ensure it actually works, and keep in mind it runs off four C size batteries, which aren't cheap, although you can plug in a mains adapter, but you'll have to buy that separately.



The simple Galaxian-inspired gameplay had one goal - reach 9999 points to get a special tune! It was a mixture of shooting and docking the space ship.



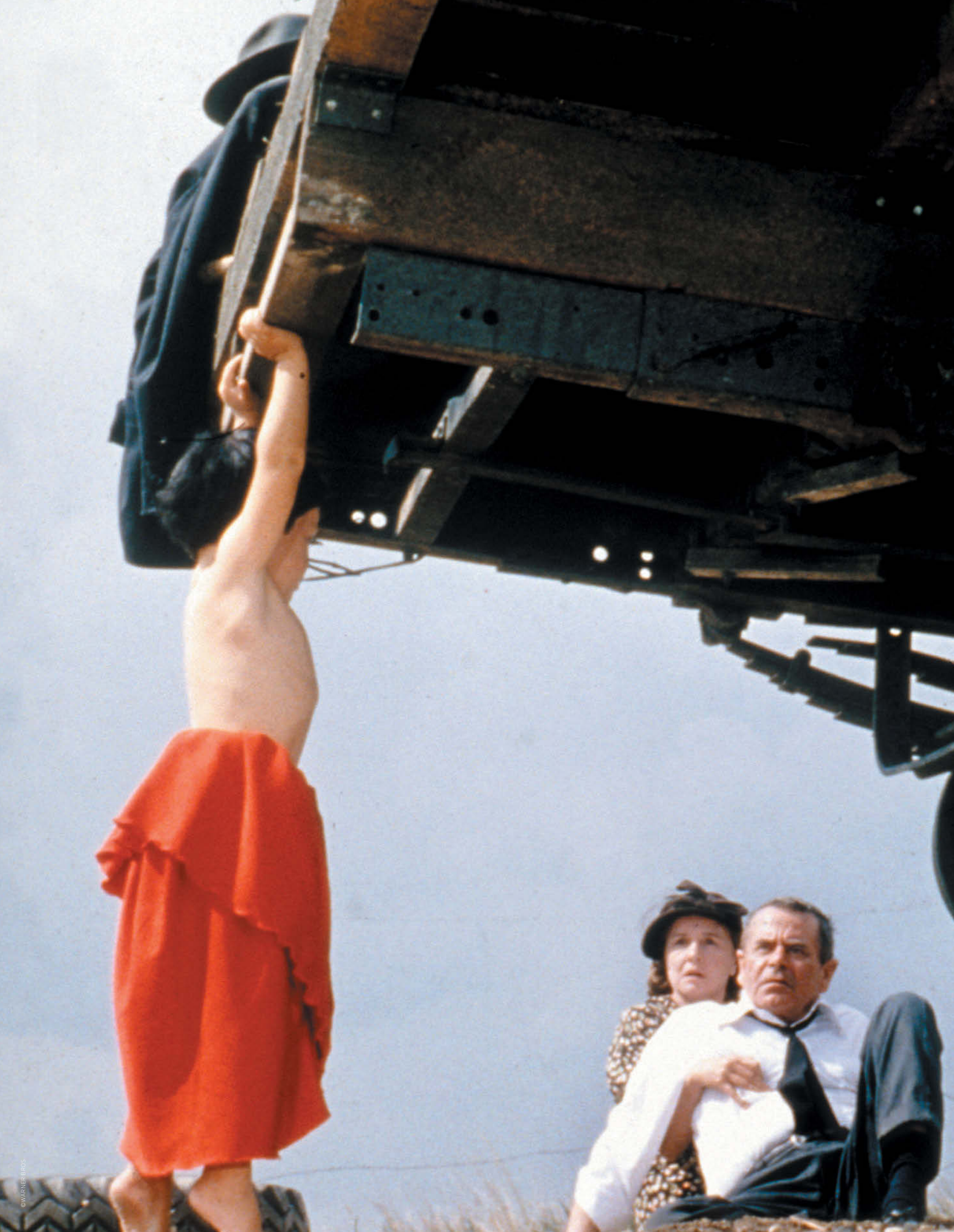


**IN THE WORLD OF VIDEO GAMES IN 1981, THE ARCADE WAS KING, AND SPACE INVADERS AND GALAXIAN WERE THE A-LIST SHOOTERS OF THE DAY**



As with many retro toys with simple electronics, the buttons can stop working. Astro Wars easily opens up for a simple repair job.







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**SUPERMAN: THE MOVIE [1978]**

*featuring*

**CHRISTOPHER REEVE // MARGOT KIDDER  
// MARLON BRANDO**

The opening credits to *Superman: The Movie* feature a comic book titled *Action Comics*. The final frame of the Daily Planet building fades to the live action building and the movie begins. The comic was drawn by Oliver Frey, who went on to create iconic computer game covers for magazines *Crash* and *ZZap!64* in the 1980s.

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“ALL THOSE THINGS I CAN DO.  
ALL THOSE POWERS. AND I  
COULDN'T EVEN SAVE HIM.”





# TABLETOP

Words: **ROB BURMAN**

Rob is the editor of Tabletop Gaming magazine



CLEAR THE DINING CAR BECAUSE WE'VE GOT A TICKET TO RIDE, AND WE DON'T CARE...

If you're already a fan of tabletop games, then you'll know how wonderful it all is. Never before has there been such a huge variety of titles available and there are new products on the horizon on an almost weekly basis. But for those that aren't part of our special club, how do you persuade them that it's not all games of Monopoly and perhaps Risk, if you're feeling particularly daring? Well, the answer is: gateway games. These are games that take newcomers on their first step... level two, in videogame terms.

One of the most popular gateway games is Ticket to Ride, which has sold millions of copies since its release in 2004. The

## THE UK EDITION INTRODUCES PLENTY OF NEW AND INTERESTING MECHANICS TO MAKE IT EVEN MORE COMPETITIVE

answer to Ticket to Ride's success is that it takes a common concept (train travel) and requires players to compete to build the best routes possible. It's an idea that's much easier to grasp, compared to some of the more abstract titles out there, and it's also extremely easy to pick up and play.

If you've never played Ticket to Ride there's now a new incentive to get a copy: Ticket to Ride: United Kingdom (Days of Wonder, £25.99). This is an expansion that requires the original (because that comes with all the trains) but features a map of the UK as players compete to build routes to far flung locations like Hull (oooooh) or Plymouth (aaaah). Meanwhile, for the Ticket to Ride expert, the UK edition introduces plenty of new and interesting mechanics to make it even more competitive.

Up next is Clacks (Backspindle Games, £29.99), which is inspired by the semaphore messaging system in Terry



## LIKE SOME KIND OF MAD TOWN PLANNER YOU'RE TRYING TO CRAM AS MANY BUILDINGS INTO THE PLOTS AS POSSIBLE



Pratchett's Discworld novels. Backspindle previously released Guards! Guards! which was set in Pratchett's iconic city of Ankh Morpork. Clacks, on the other hand, needs a little more imagination to envisage the rich tapestry of Pratchett's seminal series. You see, the game requires you to flip tiles in order to spell a particular Discworld-themed word (eg. death or moist). The tiles represent the different lamps of the clacks towers and, depending upon the specific arrangement of the tiles, they'll create a letter as you flip them over.

The issue is, of course, that your opponent is also competing to spell their word first so may unintentionally tamper with the tiles you were planning on flipping... which will result in you spelling some fruity curse words. Luckily, if you don't fancy taking on your pals, there's also a co-operative mode inspired (loosely) by the events of Going Postal. Admittedly, Clacks doesn't have such a strong theme as Backspindle's previous Guards! Guards! but it's still a novel little puzzler.

Seeing as we started with a gateway game, why don't we finish with another? New York: 1901 (Blue Orange, £34.99) is a little like Ticket to Ride but rather than building train routes this time you're competing to take over Manhattan with your skyscrapers. Set at the turn of the 20th century, space is limited in New York, so like some kind of mad town planner you're trying to cram as many buildings into the plots as possible.

Each turn you can buy a new plot of land or try to build a skyscraper. New York is split into different coloured districts and each turn you pick up 'Lot Cards' that show you where you can build and how big the building can be. Once you've got the plot, it's then a case of canny placement of your skyscraper tiles to make the most of the land and hopefully block off your opposition. It's a thoroughly enjoyable experience that's well worth a look. **GM**

How high can you go? In New York 1901 you will be building skyscrapers on a map of New York's financial district.



## A FORCE IN MINATURE...

Over the past few years Fantasy Flight has developed a well earned reputation for producing some top quality games inspired by Star Wars. From the excellent X-Wing Miniatures Game to role-playing games and Star Wars-themed dungeon crawler Imperial Assault. Well, Fantasy Flight recently announced it's adding to its Star Wars line-up with a new boardgame called Rebellion.

Players take control of either the Rebels or the Empire as they battle to take control of the galaxy and persuade different star systems to join their cause. This is done by commanding starships, moving troops and using the special talents of iconic Star Wars characters like Princess Leia or Emperor Palpatine. You can even recreate famous moments from the original trilogy, like sending Luke to receive his Jedi training on Dagobah.

There will also be plenty of important decisions to make that can potentially affect the outcome of the game. For example, as the Imperial player you can eliminate entire worlds with the Death Star but that could play into the hands of the Rebel Alliance as other systems sympathise with the inhabitants of the destroyed planet.

A little like Imperial Assault, Rebellion will come with 150 fantastic miniatures featuring spaceships, troops, vehicles and even both versions of the Death Star. This is looking like one to watch for 2016.





# THE ART OF THE BRICK

## DC COMICS IN LEGO

STARTING AT THE POWERHOUSE MUSEUM IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA AND WORKING ITS WAY AROUND THE WORLD, ARTIST NATHAN SAWAYA HAS CREATED A FASCINATING EXHIBITION COMBINING HIS PASSIONS OF DC COMICS AND LEGO



### NECESSARY EVIL

The unmistakable faces of Batman and The Joker melded together in LEGO brick form. We wonder if Nathan gets a discount from Denmark?





### LEGO BATMOBILE

Spanning 5.5 meters, Nathan's Batmobile is lifesize – one of 120 LEGO DC exhibits in the touring exhibition that began in Sydney.



### YELLOW VANDALIZED

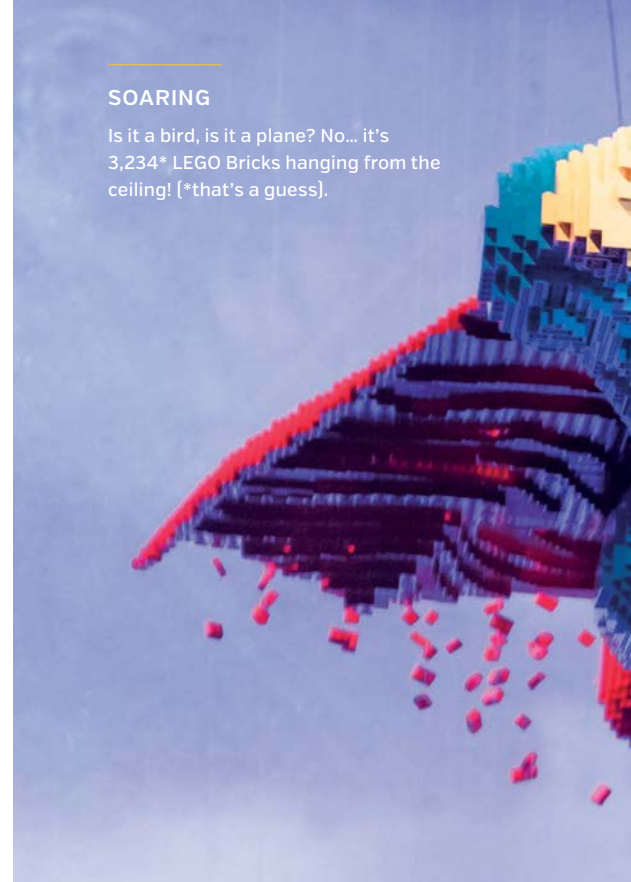
Spewing LEGO bricks from its body, this and many other impressive pieces can be seen by searching 'The Art of the Brick: DC Comics' on YouTube.





## SOARING

Is it a bird, is it a plane? No... it's 3,234\* LEGO Bricks hanging from the ceiling! [\*that's a guess].

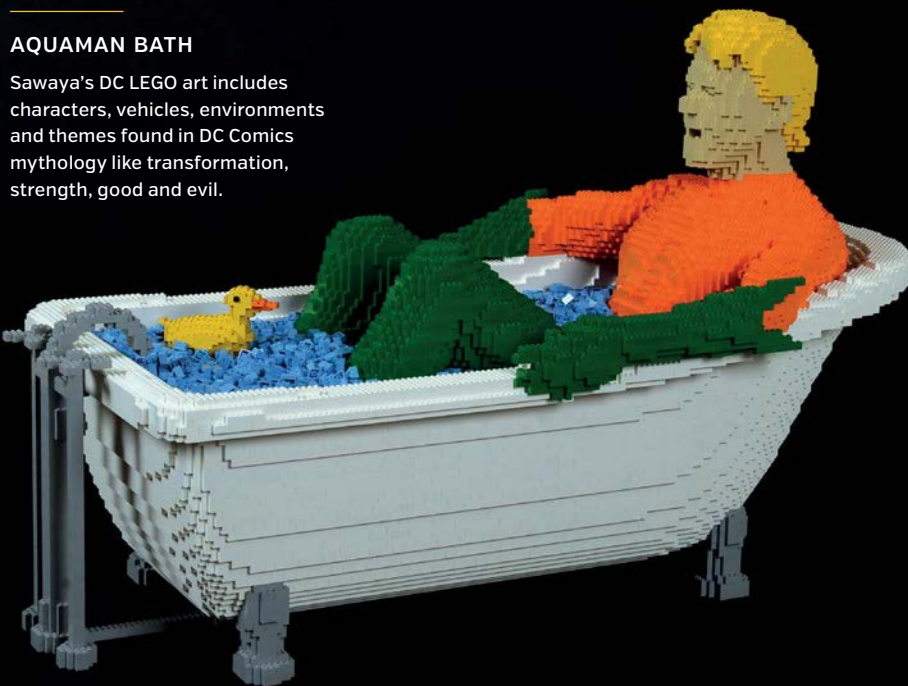


## BUILDING BATMAN

Wait. So it's Batman, built of LEGO, but he's building himself. Our brains can't cope with art concepts of this magnitude.

## AQUAMAN BATH

Sawaya's DC LEGO art includes characters, vehicles, environments and themes found in DC Comics mythology like transformation, strength, good and evil.





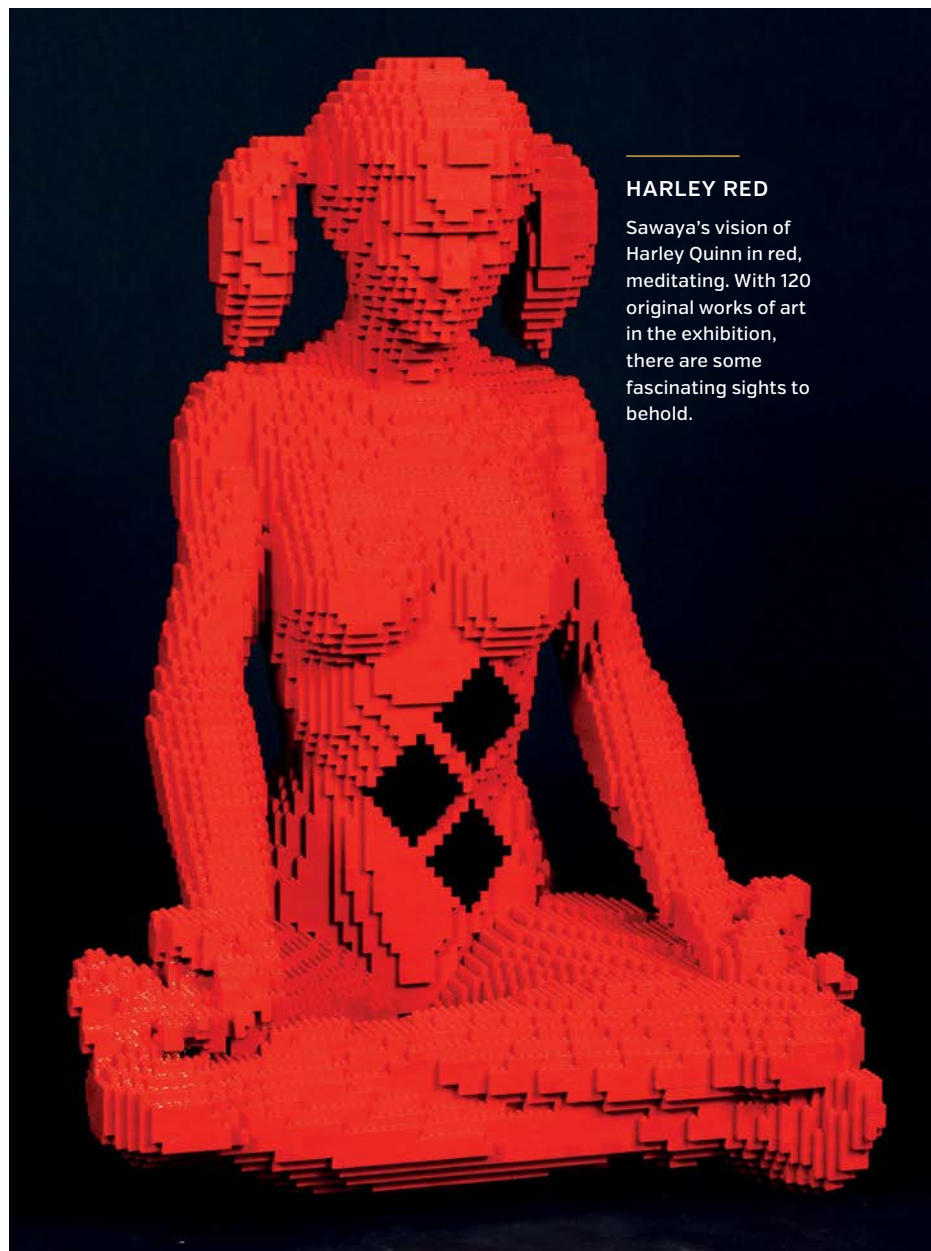


#### FLASH FORWARD

The exhibition will be at the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney until May, then it tours the major cities of the world.

**“FANS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH THEIR FAVORITE SUPER HEROES AND SUPER-VILLAINS IN AN IMMERSIVE ENVIRONMENT CUSTOMIZED FOR THE ART.”**

NATHAN SAWAYA



#### HARLEY RED

Sawaya's vision of Harley Quinn in red, meditating. With 120 original works of art in the exhibition, there are some fascinating sights to behold.



# GEEK CHIC

YOUR JACKET IS DRY...



## HOODIES

**Zelda Tri-Force Crest of Hyrule Patch**  
Retro gamers will no that you mean business with the Crest of Hyrule on your back. This is cool, and official Nintendo gear too.

£45 // [RETROSTYLER.COM](http://RETROSTYLER.COM)

**Star Wars Episode VII Hoodie Force Awakens Logo**

A simple classic, and perfect for going to see the movie again for the tenth time [this week].

£30 // [FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK](http://FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK)

**Portal 2 Aperture Test Subject Track Jacket**

Okay, we know. It's a jacket, not a hoodie. But with the Aperture logo on the back and cool orange styling, all Portal 2 fans will want one.

\$55 // [THINKGEEK.COM](http://THINKGEEK.COM)



## BAGS

**Chewbacca Plush Backpack**

It's always good to have Chewie on your side, watching your back(pack).

£45 // [RETROSTYLER.COM](http://RETROSTYLER.COM)

**R2-D2 Dome Purse**

You're not going to fit the galaxy into these purses, but you'll be 'geek chic'.

\$60 // [THINKGEEK.COM](http://THINKGEEK.COM)

**Gremlins Sports Bag**

With a reboot movie on the card, get ahead of the pack with this bag – just don't put anything into it after midnight.

£23 // [FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK](http://FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK)

**Doctor Who: Dalek British Invasion Tote Bag**

Official merchandise direct from the BBC – show the world you're Dalek and proud.

£9 // [BBCSHOP.COM](http://BBCSHOP.COM)



## TIME

**Star Wars Darth Vader Helmet Alarm Clock**

Way the force be with you... as you try to get out of bed, washed and dressed before being moaned at!

£30 // [FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK](http://FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK)

**Harry Potter Hogwarts Coat of Arms Watch**

Including the Latin phrase *Draco dormiens nunquam titillandus* (Never tickle a sleeping dragon). This is really quite a special piece.

\$30 // [THINKGEEK.COM](http://THINKGEEK.COM)

**Doctor Who Collectors Tardis Watch**  
The stylish way to lord it over time – with the Tardis door wording appears on the face of the watch and it has a quality leather strap.

£30 // [RETROSTYLER.COM](http://RETROSTYLER.COM)



## WALLETS

**Wonder Woman Clutch Purse**

All powerful women need one of these... it will keep money and cards from falling out of your pocket.

£15 // [RETROSTYLER.COM](http://RETROSTYLER.COM)

**Doctor Who Dalek Wallet**

We can't promise the inside is vastly bigger than the outside, but this official Doctor Who wallet looks great.

£10 // [BBCSHOP.COM](http://BBCSHOP.COM)

**Nintendo Zelda Embossed Bifold Wallet**

Quality, leather, embossed. Perfect.

£13 // [FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK](http://FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK)

**Fallout 4 Vault 111 Wallet**

Following atomic annihilation you will need somewhere to keep your change.

\$17 // [THINKGEEK.COM](http://THINKGEEK.COM)





## T-SHIRTS

### Game of Thrones Hodor

Bran Stark would never leave home without one of these – a Hodor!

£14 // 8BALL.CO.UK

### Flux Capacitor Friends

A unique take on Doc Brown and Marty McFly from over the pond. Most US online stores will deliver to your door.

\$14 // TEEREPUBLIC.COM

### Batman Japanese Logo

Batman is cool, right? But Batman with a Japanese logo is taking it to the next level of geekdom.

£22 // FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

### Trooper Emoticons

How is your stormtrooper feeling today? Happy, Sad, Excited, Bored or Scared?

£14 // 8BALL.CO.UK



## ACCESSORIES

### Batman Gunmetal Cufflinks

Get all the courage and confidence you need with these cufflinks holding your sleeves together.

\$18 // RETROSTYLER.COM

### Assassin's Creed Syndicate Bronze Metal Keyring

Made from solid metal, this keyring is robust enough to stand a bit of rough-toughtie from 1860's London gangsters.

£5 // FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

### BB-8 Droid Figural Necklace

Wear your love for BB-8 around your neck.

\$35 // THINKGEEK.COM

### Darth Vader Aviator Sunglasses

No, these are not just black sunglasses. They are as warn by Darth Vader (maybe).

\$20 // THINKGEEK.COM



## HATS

### Adventure Time - Beemo Beanie

Put away your 3DS – Beemo is far cooler, unless you get sucked into a game and made into polygons!

£15 // FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

### Boba Fett Beanie

Head warmth is a serious business. Keep the chill away from your brain the Mandalorian way.

\$15 // THINKGEEK.COM

### Chewbacca Laplander Hat

Keep the chills of Hoth at bay with this amazing Chewie hat.

£20 // RETROSTYLER.COM

### Fallout 4 Vault 111 Beanie

Wear your vault number with pride with this nicely embroidered beanie.

£13 // FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK



## ARE YOU SURE?

### Superman Pet Costume

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No... it's Mighty the dog. Your best friend will be the envy of the neighbourhood.

£15 // FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

### Darth Vader Flats

For when controlling the galaxy just makes your feet hurt.

\$159 // THINKGEEK.COM

### Yoda Geen and Grey Silk Skinny Tie

Look really snazzy in this tie, you will. [Sorry].

£40 // RETROSTYLER.COM

### TARDIS Light-Up Headband

Err... this could work well if you're lost at a convention? Your friends could watch out for the flashing light on your head?

\$16 // THINKGEEK.COM



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## BUCK ROGERS IN THE 25TH CENTURY (1979-1981)

NETWORK, NBC // STARRING, GIL GERARD, ERIN GRAY, PAMELA HENSLEY  
SEASONS, 2 // EPISODES, 37

# WHAT'S UP BUCK?

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### Words: MILES GUTTERY

Miles is an über geek and entertainment writer

Before 1977, science fiction was a niche genre on both the large and small screens. Then along came Star Wars and everything changed. Suddenly sci-fi spelled 'bank' and all the studios wanted in. Two major new TV shows went into production in 1977 – Battlestar Galactica and Buck Rogers in the 25th Century.

Buck was comic book character dating from 1928 and had previously been brought to the screen in 1930 and 1950. Producers Glen A Larson and Leslie Stevens who were developing the show settled on the title Buck Rogers in the 25th Century to differentiate it from what had gone before. The concept was very cool, but why should we try to explain the premise when the show's own introductory voice over does it so much better?

"The year is 1987, and NASA launches the last of America's deep space probes. In a freak mishap, Ranger 3 and its pilot, Captain William "Buck" Rogers, are blown out of their trajectory into an orbit which freezes his life-support systems, and returns Buck Rogers to Earth, 500 years later."

If you were a kid in 1979 when the show first aired, you'll most likely remember two things – Twiki the robot saying "Biddi-biddi-biddi... what's up Buck?", and Colonel Wilma Deering, wearer of the tightest space suits known to man. Many would argue she justified the show alone. Wilma wasn't just window dressing though, she was a military commander and fighter pilot. Actress Erin Gray said of the role: "Yes. I was the first female colonel. I enjoyed being that kind of role model for young women watching the show. A woman can be a colonel! A woman can be in charge! Those were new ideas then."

A feature-length pilot was released in cinemas in the US and pulled in a respectable \$21m profit at the box office. It depicted Buck thrown into a post-apocalyptic future in which most of the world had been reduced to wasteland roamed by dangerous mutants while the remainder of humanity lived in fortified cities. This idea was scrapped for the TV series however, which softened or removed all the darker elements of the pilot to ensure complete kiddie-friendliness. The central idea remained though, with Buck recruited into the Earth Defence Directorate to help defend the planet against Alien invasions, particularly the Draconian empire led by sultry sexpot Princess Ardala. Many of the costumes, props and sets were reused from Battlestar Galactica, and the starfighter design was actually a rejected early design for Battlestar Galactica's Viper fighters.

The series wasn't received well by critics of the time and has appeared in polls of the worst sci-fi shows ever, but if you were a kid when it aired in 1979 then you'll have nothing but fond



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## A FEATURE-LENGTH PILOT WAS RELEASED IN CINEMAS IN THE US AND PULLED IN A RESPECTABLE \$21M PROFIT AT THE BOX OFFICE

memories. Not all of it stands up to the scrutiny of grown up expectations and sensibilities. In fact the main star Gil Gerard reportedly wanted the show cancelled after the first series so he wouldn't have to be involved with it anymore. "I'd always wanted the show to be more reality based science fiction, something along the lines of The Day the Earth Stood Still, which I consider to be the classic science fiction film." He said later.

A second series was commissioned, but big changes were made to the format to basically turn it into Star Trek. Buck, Wilma and Twiki found themselves transferred to a spacecraft called the Searcher which roamed the universe in a very Enterprise-like fashion. Buck was Kirk, Wilma was Uhura and new Character Hawk, the last of a race of bird people, was a reasonable facsimile of Spock. Despite a more serious tone and episodes tackling real issues like pollution and racism, the new format failed to ignite public interest and after poor viewing figures the show was cancelled after 11 episodes of season two. **GM**







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## WESTWORLD (1973)

DIRECTOR, MICHAEL CRICHTON

# THE HAPPIEST PLACE ON EARTH?

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**Words: HUGH DAVID**

Hugh is a regular contributor to NEO magazine

These days the late writer/director/producer Michael Crichton is mostly spoken of by young geeks as an afterthought, the man who wrote the books Steven Spielberg turned into the Jurassic Park films. This does him a massive disservice; between his books, films, and adaptations of those books, he is responsible for more prime geek fare over four decades than almost any other creator. If there is one work however that still stands out now, strong in the memory of older geeks who saw it before everyone ripped it off, it's his first original feature film as writer-director, *Westworld*.

Following on from the unexpectedly huge success of his debut novel *The Andromeda Strain* and its movie adaptation (another all-time geek classic), former medical doctor Crichton developed a story solely for the big screen. While Hollywood was busy adapting his next book *The Terminal Man* he persuaded producers to let him direct his script with a decent budget and solid stars in Richard Benjamin, James Brolin and the legendary Yul Brynner. The plot was straightforward enough: in the future, humans use androids to enjoy holidays in which they can act out fantasy lives without serious consequences, inside such environments as Romanworld or Medievalworld. We follow two friends on a trip to Westworld to help one of them get over his divorce in the manliest fashion possible: dressing up and playing at being an Old West gunslinger, complete with showdowns, barroom brawls, brothel visits and a prison break. And then things start to go wrong with the androids...

The film as a whole is not just a model for Jurassic Park but also *Robocop* (the Western tropes) and *The Terminator*, particularly with Brynner's stripped-back, emotionless killer. It's a performance that Schwarzenegger clearly looked to (as well as other performers – a great episode of *Buck Rogers* borrows heavily). His relentlessness and sure-footed determination instead of speed mark this out as different from previous on-screen robots. Crichton's implicit criticism of applied commercial science is also there, a running thread throughout his work, in which science is both threat and saviour. There's also a nifty subtext offering a critical appraisal of American white masculinity and the fantasies that underpin it.

Under his direction the film is never po-faced, never sentimental, never heavy-handed. Instead it is by turns funny, thoughtful, sexy, violent and horrific, with the bonus of groundbreaking effects. This was the first film to ever use computer graphics as an actual visual shot, here representing the killer android's point of view, again pre-figuring *The Terminator* and *Robocop*. It's a remarkable first feature from the young writer-director, and set a high bar for his future work.



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## THE FILM AS A WHOLE IS NOT JUST A MODEL FOR JURASSIC PARK BUT ALSO ROBOCOP

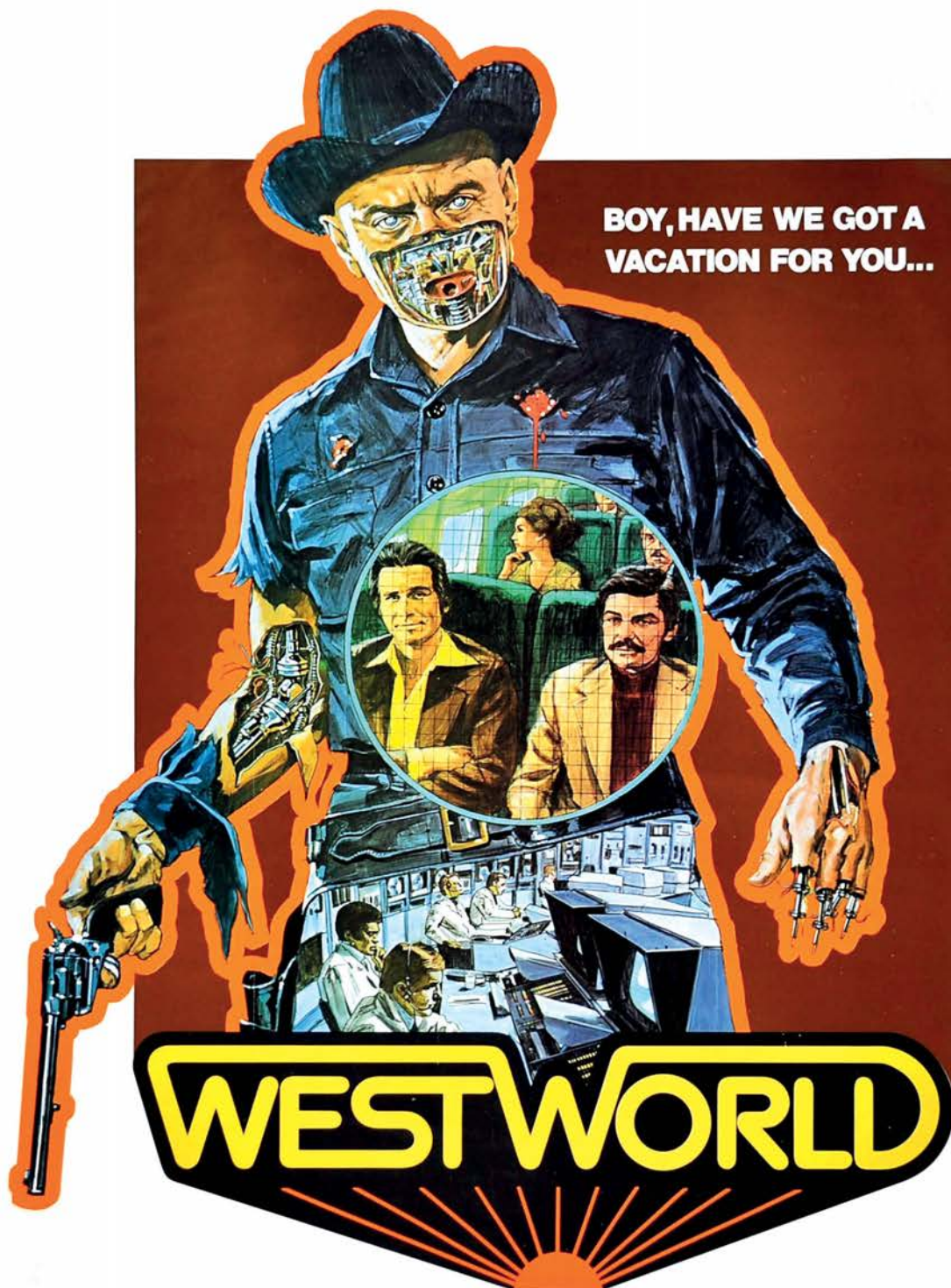
The follow-up film *Futureworld* (1978) and TV series *Beyond Westworld* (1980) failed to capture audiences with good reason. Studios now think they can churn out any old tie-in and fans will buy them (because let's face it, we all too frequently do!), but back then the long gap from the first film meant both failed to grab proto-geeks. *Futureworld* had a good cast and interesting locations with the use of NASA's Houston Space Center, but not much else. *Beyond* had a concept that sounds good on paper, but sadly, the idea of investigating an undercover new android with specific new abilities each week needed better budgets and execution, and the show was cancelled after five episodes.

Still, in this age of remakes inevitably one is on the way. Person of Interest's Jonathan Nolan is showrunning the first season (of a potential five) for HBO, who haven't yet done sci-fi. Given their approach to fantasy with *Game of Thrones*, the initial trailer and reports suggest an increase in the sexual content compared to the original film, although the violence will be in-keeping. It is Nolan's fascination with AI and the intersection of technology with society that's going to give it longevity, picking up the threads Crichton first laid down. Forty years on, Michael Crichton is still cutting edge. **GM**

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**Westworld is out on Blu-ray from Warner Bros including the Beyond Westworld pilot as an extra. Futureworld is a solid no-frills DVD from 101 Films.**





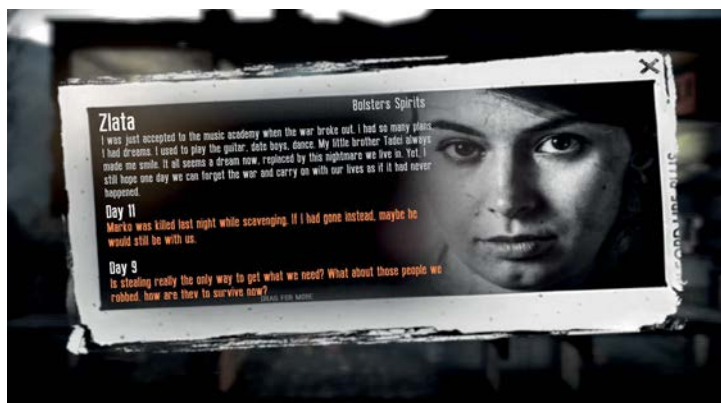
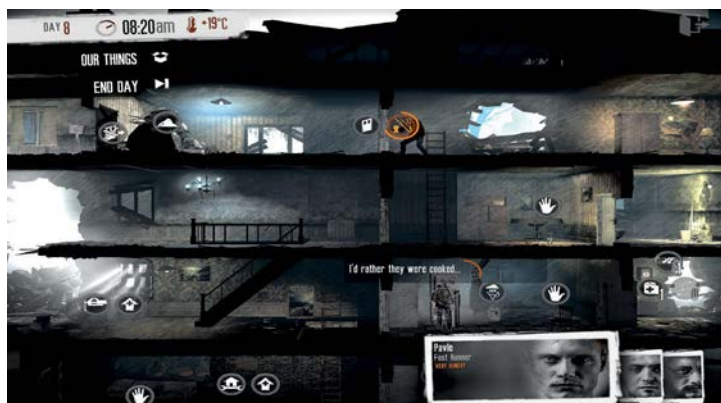
BOY, HAVE WE GOT A  
VACATION FOR YOU...

...Where nothing can possibly go wrong

MGM Presents  
"WESTWORLD" Starring YUL BRYNNER RICHARD BENJAMIN  
JAMES BROLIN • Music by FRED KARLIN • Written and Directed by MICHAEL CRICHTON • Produced by PAUL N. LAZARUS III  
PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE SUGGESTED • PANAVISION® METROCOLOR







Not so much fun, but thought-provoking and inspired by real-life events.



## This War of Mine

iOS £10.99 // ANDROID £4.99  
DEVELOPER, 11 BIT STUDIOS

If war is hell then hell is a rollercoaster, or at least that's what you'd be led to believe if you viewed armed conflict exclusively through the prism of the average videogame. This War of Mine is different. It doesn't place you in the role of a super soldier or a mega general, or leader of a squad of ultimate badassess out for a thrilling time. Instead it takes you away from the excitement and behind the rubble to experience the everyday life of civilians trapped in a besieged city, and by doing so manages to be one of the most effective games about war ever created.

During daylight hours snipers will keep your small group of everyday people hiding within the protection of a partially destroyed building, which provides the opportunity to heal the wounded, feed and rest the weary and construct items useful to their survival. Once the sun sets someone can be selected to go out to scavenge for materials and supplies in nearby buildings as the others rest or guard your base, and so the day/night cycle continues until a ceasefire is declared at some unforeseeable time. That's a basic overview, and as a side-on and beautifully drawn tactical game it's highly engaging. The actual experience of play, however, is more like rolling down a spiral of depression where you'll find yourself performing dehumanising acts and making increasingly tougher decisions.

On a night's mission one of your survivors might enter the home of an elderly couple and calmly walk passed the pair as they plead for their food to be left alone, because they're sick and starving. Under your guidance your civilian will ransack their fridge, because they're also driven by hunger, and then take as much of whatever else they can find before returning, only to find that their home has also

been ransacked and that your other survivors were too tired or poorly armed to do anything about it. They next day someone might knock at your door, and before you send someone to see what they want you'll first have them take bits of metal and forge them into a knife. One day you'll hope to have a gun.

Not everyone you'll encounter on a scavenger hunt will be old and infirm. Many will be young, hungry, heavily

## YOU'LL BE ABLE TO TELL BY THEIR ANIMATIONS THAT THEY'RE LOSING HOPE AND CAN BARELY CONTINUE

armed and dangerously paranoid. While you can trade with them your situation can degrade to such a point that you'll have to steal to survive. Should one of your survivors get caught stealing and not manage to run they'll probably get shot or least stabbed. Get shot or stabbed and they'll probably die. One death will affect the entire group, and you'll be able to tell by their animations that they're losing hope and can barely continue. Should they too have to run they could find they lack the energy, and so it's possible for the game to be over because everyone died while desperately trying to steal a tin of peaches or some bandages.

It's not a typical thrill ride of a war game, although against its mire of misery come some moments joy, like when you manage to procure enough food for everyone to eat a cooked meal. But it is utterly enthralling, emotionally engaging, deeply haunting and so truly worthy of your time.

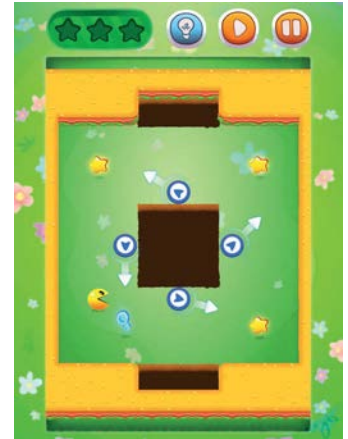
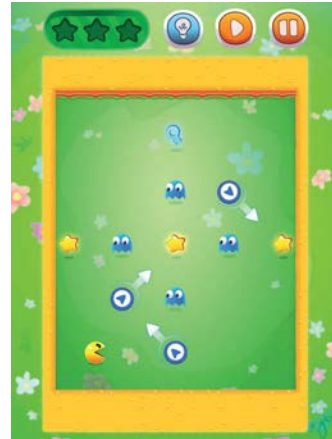


## Pac-Man Bounce

iOS FREE // ANDROID FREE  
DEVELOPER, BANDAI NAMCO ENTERTAINMENT



If you're looking for a fantastic re-imagining of classic Pac-Man then you need to ignore the rest of this review and go play Pac-Man Championship Edition DX as it's mightily fabulous and often hypnotic. If you're looking for a puzzle game based on bouncing a yellow ball off walls and smaller obstacles that you can move and angle so that the yellow ball avoids traps, collects stars, and eventually lands on a key, then... well, that's pretty much what Pac-Man Bounce is all about, and often quite delightful it is too. Each level requires a surprising amount of forethought before you send the jaundiced wonder on his unstoppable way, while the Pac-Man styling just about justifies it not being a game of pool trick shots.



## The Room 3

iOS £3.99 //  
DEVELOPER, FIREPROOF GAMES



Had the third iteration of this luxurious series of eerie puzzle games offered more of the same then it would be hard to complain. Such was the quality of The Room and its unimaginatively titled sequel, The Room 2. Impressively, The Room 3 is actually roomier than it needs to be, and manages to be more eerie and disturbing. Physical conundrums, with tactile dials and sliders, draws and intricate mechanisms, spread themselves across wider locations and are consequently less confined and boxy, while there are some that are tiny but no less consuming, and all tied together by a narrative that will make little sense to most, and an atmosphere that's a bit like being trapped in a sauna with a flatulent Edgar Allan Poe.

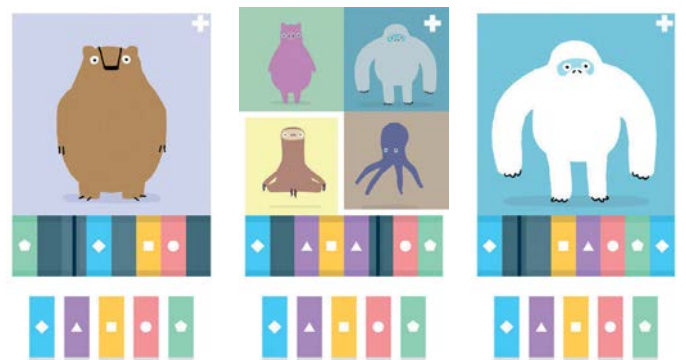


## Loopimal

iOS £2.49 //  
DEVELOPER, LUCAS ZANOTTO



Sure it's aimed at kids, but that doesn't mean that this musical app isn't something to put a smile on an adult's face and hold it there for many a merry moment. Admittedly, it's all pretty simple. You're provided with a cartoon animal and a row of empty squares on a time line. You can move tiles onto these squares that represent noises and animations. With almost no effort it's possible to create a musical sequence backed by a dancing creature, then add three more creatures each with their own style of sound. Like the gorilla who provides percussion and an octopus who is all about the bass and cares little for the treble. The end results can sound like something you might expect to hear being played in a hipster bar.





## Brothers: A Tale of Two Sons

iOS £3.99 // ANDROID £3.99  
DEVELOPER, STARBREEZE STUDIOS



Initially the gaming equivalent of rubbing your tummy and patting your head at the same time, this platform puzzler is far more than just an excuse to experiment with an unusual and unnatural control system and, if there's blood in your veins could well leave you in tears, or at least with warm and moist eyeballs.

As its name partially suggests it's about two brothers who go on a journey through a grim fairytale landscape in search of a potion that will save their father from a sickness. It's also about one player controlling both boys simultaneously using two virtual thumbsticks. More importantly it's about coming to a deep understanding of how their unique strengths and weaknesses complement each other and using them together to overcome obstacles and avoid or defeat enemies.

Often looking like your favourite and most spooky illustrated childhood storybook (that possibly gave you nightmares), Brothers joins the likes of Limbo as being yet another stark Scandinavian title that only takes a few hours to complete but those few hours will linger long in your memory. Never outstaying its welcome, it may even leave you dwelling deeply on the importance of your own siblings.



The dual virtual joystick control method is a thrill and a curse in equal measure.

## Templar Battleforce RPG

iOS £7.99 // ANDROID £7.88  
DEVELOPER, TRESE BROTHERS



How about some man verses alien in desperate battle? Heavily armoured and deeply religious space marine-types verses demonic monstrosities? Cover Games Workshop's relentlessly litigious eyes and ears for a handful of seconds as what we

have here is, obviously not accidentally, quite a bit like Space Hulk. Although it's got far greater depth, more impressive scale and functionality, and illustrated with a visual flair that would only impress someone who is stuck in the early 1990s and has just started playing Alien Breed.

Templar Battleforce certainly won't be winning any awards for its art, which is functional at best. Get into its turn-based squad dynamics, level-up a Templar and start relying on their improved characteristics and equipment to push further into an often expansive tough mission and it won't be long before it demonstrates how excellent it really is. Certainly superior to anything Games Workshop has released in many a galactic cycle, it's a shame that plenty will be put off making a purchase because of graphics that really do look overly homemade and belie a game that's otherwise incredibly masterful and really worth getting to know.



With a retro original-GTA style, there are over 45 scenarios to play through.



## Space Simulator

iOS £3.99 // ANDROID £3.99  
DEVELOPER, BRIXTON DYNAMICS

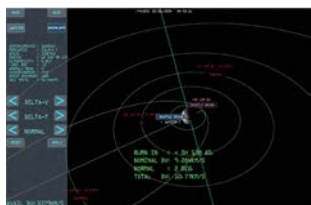


Getting a metal tube from Earth into space and back again is tough. Indeed, as it turns out, it is actually 'rocket science'. Taking one across our solar system to orbit another planet or one of its moons is even tougher, but thanks to this remarkably detailed app it sure can be enjoyable, while simultaneously being really quite educational.

The app features all the fun of engaging in a number of NASA missions using a famous vehicles. It's now updated to include the American X-15 Space Plane which first flew in 1959. To modern eyes the X-15 looks like something from Buck Rogers! Space Simulator really does live up to its name featuring a vast amount of detail, both visual and technical. It also looks better now than it ever has thanks to improvements like a brand new back-scattering renderer for Earth that makes the behaviour of light more realistic, wonderfully fluffy volumetric clouds, and a first-person view.

## YOU CAN TAKE PART IN THEORETICAL FLIGHTS EXPLORING OUR SOLAR SYSTEM AND EVEN GET TO ITS VERY EDGES

Enabling you to take part in the Apollo space program and other real-life scenarios people actually flew certainly is a plus, but while you can dock in the International Space Station and perform your own moon landing, you're also able to forget the past and what's been accomplished. You can take part in theoretical flights exploring our solar system and even get to its very edges by computing your own orbital slingshots using the gravitational pull of planets. Again, that's definitely rocket science, so if you don't think your brain is quite ready for managing a string of complex commands then you could just set everything to automatic and tag along for the ride. You won't have to spend six months just to get to Mars either or use a vacuum cleaner as a toilet – which is always a bonus.



Houston, we have a problem. We can't understand this map.

## 5 ESSENTIAL APPS YOU NEED TO OWN



### VHS CAMCORDER

iOS £2.99 // ANDROID £2.99  
DEVELOPER, RAREVISION

If you yearn for the days when machines could actually decide to eat movies, paused images stuttered, and video effects only ever added a layer of cheese to home videos, then this app is for you. It will turn your phone into an early 90's camcorder, and a fantastic job it does too.



### DOWNWELL

iOS £2.99 // ANDROID £2.99  
DEVELOPER, DEVOLVER DIGITAL

In the 1980's they'd probably call this one Horace Falls Down a Well, and it would be the finest ZX Spectrum shooter ever made. Procedurally generated and so different every time you play, it's a bit like Ikaruga, in a well, with a bloke wearing guns on his boots. Awesome.



### EVEL KNEIVEL

iOS £1.39 // ANDROID £1.39  
DEVELOPER, BARNSTORM GAMES

Clearly built with a lot of love, this simple but perfectly formed take on Trials HD follows the 1970's stuntman superstar, action toy model and professional bone breaker through his entire career from 1965 onwards and even features sound samples from the great man himself.



### COIN OP HEROES 2

iOS FREE // ANDROID FREE  
DEVELOPER, RED SIX INTERACTIVE

Despite initial appearances this truly bizarre one-button action RPG actually requires far more than the ability to tap the screen repeatedly for what seems like an eternity. Give it a go, get to know its intricacies, and you may well find something oddly special that you will want to keep on your device.

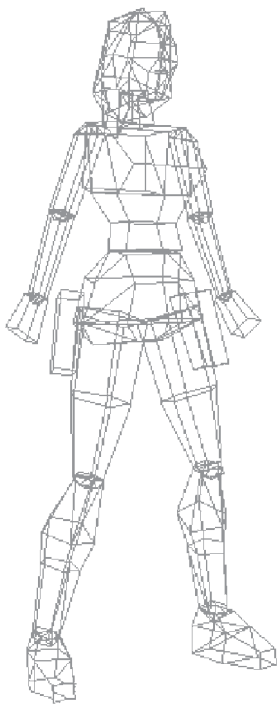


### FREEZE! 2 - BROTHERS

iOS £1.49 // ANDROID £1.39  
DEVELOPER, FROZEN GUN GAMES

More brother gaming, only this time sibling eyeball things of different weights that need to be guided through a maze you rotate. They can be frozen in mid-air should needs be, and the result is a cunning and quirky puzzler you can play without getting overly emotional.





ADRIAN SMITH



## CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

**CORPORATION** [1990]  
// AMIGA/ATARI ST/DOS

**CHUCK ROCK** [1991]  
// AMIGA/ATARI ST/C64/MD/  
SEGA CD/GAME GEAR/SNES

**WONDER DOG** [1992]  
// AMIGA/SEGA CD

**THUNDERHAWK** [1992]  
// AMIGA/DOS/SEGA CD

**TOMB RAIDER** [1996]  
// PC/PLAYSTATION/SATURN

**NINJA: SHADOW OF  
DARKNESS** [1998]  
// PLAYSTATION

**LARA CROFT: TOMB RAIDER  
MOVIE** [2001]  
// PARAMOUNT PICTURES

**WITHOUT WARNING** [2005]  
// PLAYSTATION2/XBOX

**NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL  
MUSIC GAME** [2006]  
// DVD

**LEGO STAR WARS: THE NEW  
YODA CHRONICLES** [2014]  
// IOS/ANDROID/WEB

## BACKTALK

# Girl Power Play

EX-CORE DESIGN BOSS ADRIAN SMITH ON THE GIRL THAT FUELLED GIRL POWER IN THE 1990S...



This year marks the 20th anniversary of Lara Croft leaving the safety of her English manor house and going in search of tombs to raid. The series is now one of the most successful videogame franchises of all time. With *Rise of the Tomb Raider* riding high in the game charts over Christmas we thought twenty years was long enough to wait for a chat with ex-Core Design Director and game development guru Adrian Smith. We wondered what it was like to be partly responsible for girl power in the 1990s.

### Core Design was formed in 1988 in Derby by ex-Gremlin Graphics people, what brought you to the company?

Actually it was my brother. Jeremy was ex-Gremlin and started Core Design in the early days. I joined a couple of years after it started, bringing a slightly different skill set as I came from a different background. The company was relatively small when I joined, and I helped expand it from there on in.

### Which games were the early successes for Core?

I call those days 'the good old days'. They were very different to the way it is today. The structure was very different, people were very different. A bunch of us would sit around and come up with an off the wall and wacky idea for a game to develop. Low and behold, a couple of months later, there was the game! An example is *Rick Dangerous* – an exceptionally hard game, which I think is why people loved it so much. Most of the early games were hugely creative, produced by the people within the company who had a passion for designing and building something and had the freedom to create those games.

We were reputed to have created one of the very first first-person shooters, a game called *Corporation*. It was available two years before *Wolfenstein*.

### Having already published *Rick Dangerous*, was there an Indiana Jones fan at Core that influenced the creation of *Tomb Raider*?

The original team was headed up by a guy called Toby Gard who was quite a young artist. When he sent his CV in to us he produced a very nice animation of a stick character swinging around on a rope. We all saw this and said "wow, that's really cool". We had a big meeting to discuss what games we were going to do, and that was the beginning of *Tomb Raider*. We said, "wouldn't it be a great do to do a game in temples and pyramids, because

they're shrouded in mystery and suspense, and we could do all sorts of funky stuff." Toby wasn't at Core Design for *Rick Dangerous*, so there's no link, no. It was bizarre that there was a collection of ideas that came together, when we put all the ideas down we had an Indiana Jones-esque character

### Is it true that in early development the game had a male stand-in? What was the thinking behind the change to a woman?

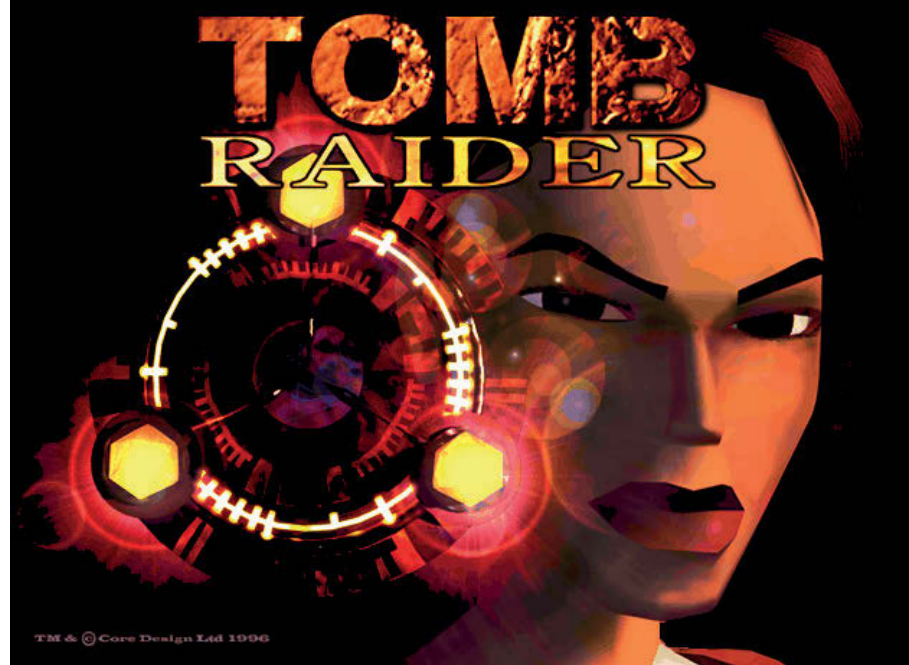
No, I've heard this a number of times. It's one of those urban myths I guess. It was always a woman. How Lara looked in the first game was very true to how Toby drew her. His original image, I can still remember very clearly, was Lara standing on a mountaintop in some combat trousers. That was one of the significant changes that we made. She looked a little bit ungainly and unsightly, with big baggy trousers on.

The character came about because we wrote down the series of attributes that we wanted the character to have. We wanted an agility, not necessarily a gun-toting superhero, and when we looked at it – it was a woman. It was that simple, but it was a massive, massive decision. It went against everything. Everyone was telling us, "don't make it a female character, or at least have the option of a male character." Which I think is where these myths have come about that she may have been a bloke. Her name was different, she was originally Lara Cruz, but we thought we would make her more English.

### Toby Gard designed Lara herself, but as one of the first third-person 3D adventure games for console there must have been some really innovative thinkers at Core.

There were lots of arguments... ha, ha! Whether that was innovative thinkers I don't know! I remember having hours and hours of discussion about what would happen when Lara walked into a room and the camera was still outside in the corridor, and how would the player know they were controlling the character? I think there were lots and lots of heated conversations in the early days. But they were nice heated conversions. People were trying to work out how we could bring this genre, and what we wanted to achieve, to market. Because of that we had lots of people who did share the same vision. The designers, the animators, everybody bought into the vision of what we wanted to achieve, but it did tend to cause a few heated conversations.





A massive inspiration to us was the Ultima Underworld series. We loved the exploratory element that that game brought. We were really big fans, and that game was quite a big draw to us. To take something that people had played and were familiar with and to turn it on its head and introduce a 3D elements to it. We had massive problems and issues around making it 3D. It was all new tech, how do we build the levels? We were looking at great side-scrolling platform games that we had produced, and were very common in the market. Then introducing this character – would people relate to the character? Would they get the new angles that we were trying to do?

**Tomb Raider debuted on the SEGA Saturn four weeks before the new-fangled PlayStation console. How did that come about?**

Well Core's history was very much being a SEGA house. We used to say if you chopped our legs off we would have SEGA in blue written through our bones. It was partly the relationship we had. We had some very good friends there. In the early days SEGA was very good to us and helped us a lot. That's why really, we had a much older relationship with SEGA and Sony were very much the new kids on the block. None of us knew whether this PlayStation machine was going to work. We truly believed then that SEGA was going to be the dominant force moving forward, as they always had been, because SEGA made great games. What did Sony do? Well, they made Walkmans.

**It wasn't long before Sony wanted an exclusive deal for the sequels though...**

Yeah, well Sony did a wonderful job marketing the game. And so did SEGA. But Sony presented us with an opportunity to maximise the marketing potential for Lara and she became the face of PlayStation. What was important to Sony was to keep their brand popular, and Lara was a popular franchise, and it was a great relationship. We went on to do other versions for SEGA on Dreamcast.

**With Spice Girls' Wannabe debuting in July 1996 and Tomb Raider launching in October, how does it feel to be one of the driving forces of girl power?**

As a male, very strange! Yeah, it was fairly unusual for us. I think at that time we had literally had no more than two female employees at Core, it was very much a male dominated industry then. We we did have Heather ►

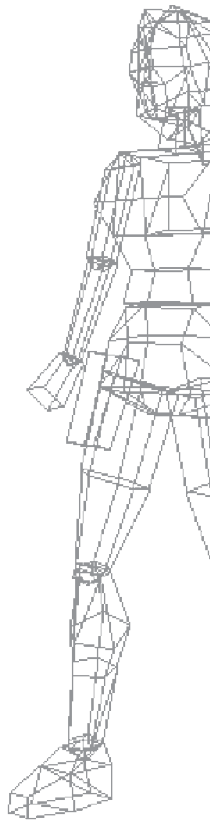


**SONY PRESENTED US WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAXIMISE THE MARKETING POTENTIAL FOR LARA AND SHE BECAME THE FACE OF PLAYSTATION**





**I WOULD LOVE TO SAY THAT WE THOUGHT OF IT AS A STROKE OF GENIUS, ALL THIS GIRL POWER, BUT I THINK IT WAS VERY MUCH THE VOGUE AT THE TIME**



Gibson, and she worked on the Tomb Raider series, bizarrely enough. I would love to say that we thought of it as a stroke of genius, all this girl power, but I think it was very much the vogue at the time. For people who were young and forward thinking it just slotted into place. More luck than planning to be honest, no-one thought The Spice Girls were going to be as big as they were, that only benefitted us really.

#### **Was there a lot of debate about Lara's vital statistics?**

No, but there seems to have been a lot of debate since! For us she was a cartoon character, no different to the classic Fred Quimby Tom and Jerry cartoons. Jerry would hit Tom and his foot would swell to massive proportions. For us, when we created Lara, we knew that the players would mostly be seeing her from behind, she had to have some curves on her. So just like a cartoon artist, we under and overemphasised certain aspects of her body. So we made her have a tiny little waist, so the player would realise that she had a waist. If not she would have just looked like a cylinder.

We were also limited massively by poly count. The original Lara was only about 200 polygons. Nowadays people put that many in the petal of a plant that you walk past in a game. So we had a massive constraint on what we could make her out of.

#### **With the original game going on to sell 7.5 million copies worldwide, there must have been some great parties at Core to celebrate?**

Ha, ha! I still think they're going on! Yeah, huge, absolutely huge. We never envisaged in our wildest dreams the success the game has had. Even a couple of weeks before launch, when we knew we had done something special and everybody was talking about it, I remember attending a sales meeting for US Gold, the original publisher. They wrote the sales forecast on a board in front of us all and I just laughed as I thought it was totally unachievable. These numbers were so unfamiliar. But it did, and it smashed even those figures.

It was a great time, the team took a long deserved rest, then we were straight back onto Tomb Raider II.

#### **And Tomb Raider 3, 4, 5, 6...**

Yeah, being in the industry now, we look back at the mistakes and I think many a studio has maintained a franchise, but what they have been successful at is piggybacking. So putting the game with two studios, one





does one year, one does the next year. That's something we should have thought of. We were still quite a small company. Tomb Raider helped the company advance and grow. We were really keen to keep the passion, but it meant developing a game over a nine month period, which was incredibly tight. The original game we did with only nine people, which is nothing by comparison to today.

**After PlayStation exclusives, sequels, sponsorship deals, a cover on The Face and Hollywood movie premieres: did the enormous success of Tomb Raider surprise you?**

I have to say yes. I mean, day by day we were constantly surprised by the opportunities that Lara brought. You couldn't pick up a newspaper for a period of time without seeing some reference to Lara. You would sit and watch television quizzes and Lara would be mentioned. It was just bizarre. I don't think any of us expected that. We knew we had created something fun – we used to sit in the evenings for two or three hours playing the game – but not the global phenomenon that it became.

Every day was a treat. You would pick up the phone and it was U2 asking "can we use Lara on our tour". It was the most bizarre experience.

**So which game has been your personal favourite?**

At Core I was responsible for the best part of 50 games. Tomb Raider was a big part of that, but at the same time we had three other teams working on three other games. The one that was always really close to my heart was a game we produced called Herdy Gerdy. It was a lovely, lovely game on PS2, and a really great team that produced it. Visually it was stunning, it was way ahead of its time. I loved the mechanics of the game and the simplicity. It was all about how things interacted with each other. It was never a huge success, as is quite often the case. It was quite critically acclaimed, but for me it was a real special game.

**What has been the pinnacle of the Tomb Raider experience for you?**

It's probably the same as the consumer's as well. It was the first time, in the original Tomb Raider game, when you are down in the bottom of the valley and you turn the corner and come face to face with a T-Rex. For me, we talked about it, I saw them modelling the T-Rex, but the



ANGELINA JOLIE AS LARA,  
CHRIS BARRIE AS HILLARY,  
NOAH TAYLOR AS BRYCE

first time I saw it in context... you come around the corner and there is was, it's like... woah! For many people it was a shock, it wasn't expected. I even knew it was going to be there, but the first time it chased me through that canyon was really special.

**When Angel of Darkness was not favourably received by gamers in 2003 Eidos passed Tomb Raider development to Crystal Dynamics. Was that a hard to swallow?**

It was massive to swallow. We had worked on six versions of the game at that point, and as fun as they were, they were also really hard. It was many, many late nights. Every single thing to do with Lara came from Core Design. It came from the office in Derby. It came from silly conversations like "When should we make her birthday?" "Well how about February 14th?". She was a massive part of Core Design and everybody that worked there. So losing it was like having your legs chopped off. One day she was there, the next day she was gone. We all felt upset.

**Lara has been praised for empowering women and criticised as sexist for her 'ample' assets in equal measure. What would you like her lasting legacy to be?**

I would like to think that the whole Tomb Raider series brought a level of escapism to the players. Something they could experience and somewhere they could experience. We always hoped we would widen the game players to not only be boys sat there playing games. We were conscious that Lara was feminine, and we really wanted her to be feminine and appeal to girls. It was important for us to do.

**Tell us the truth Adrian, did you fancy Lara Croft?**

Ha, ha. Well everyone says, "is it my wife, is it a friend, is it my sister!" Um... yeah. She was a sassy lady. Look, I think we made sure she was sassy. She knew what she wanted, she was prepared to go for it. So yeah, a little part of me found her attractive. **GM**

**Adrian Smith is now Production Director of mobile and web game developer Amuzo, working on marketing games for global brands like LEGO.**

**The latest game from Adrian's team is LEGO Star Wars: Ultimate Rebel, available to play for free at LEGO.com.**

## LARA CROFT'S CORE YEARS...

**TOMB RAIDER** [1996]  
// PC/PLAYSTATION/SATURN

**TOMB RAIDER II** [1997]  
// PC/PLAYSTATION

**TOMB RAIDER III** [1998]  
// PC/PLAYSTATION/MAC

**TOMB RAIDER: THE LAST REVELATION** [1999]  
// DREAMCAST, PC, PLAYSTATION

**TOMB RAIDER CHRONICLES** [2000]  
// DREAMCAST, PC, PLAYSTATION

**TOMB RAIDER** [2000]  
// GAME BOY COLOR

**TOMB RAIDER: CURSE OF THE SWORD** [2001]  
// GAME BOY COLOR

**TOMB RAIDER: THE PROPHECY** [2002]  
// GAME BOY ADVANCE

**TOMB RAIDER: THE ANGEL OF DARKNESS** [2003]  
// PC/PLAYSTATION2/MAC



TIME

5

SCORE

1467





0400

LAP

0' 49" 75



STAGE

5





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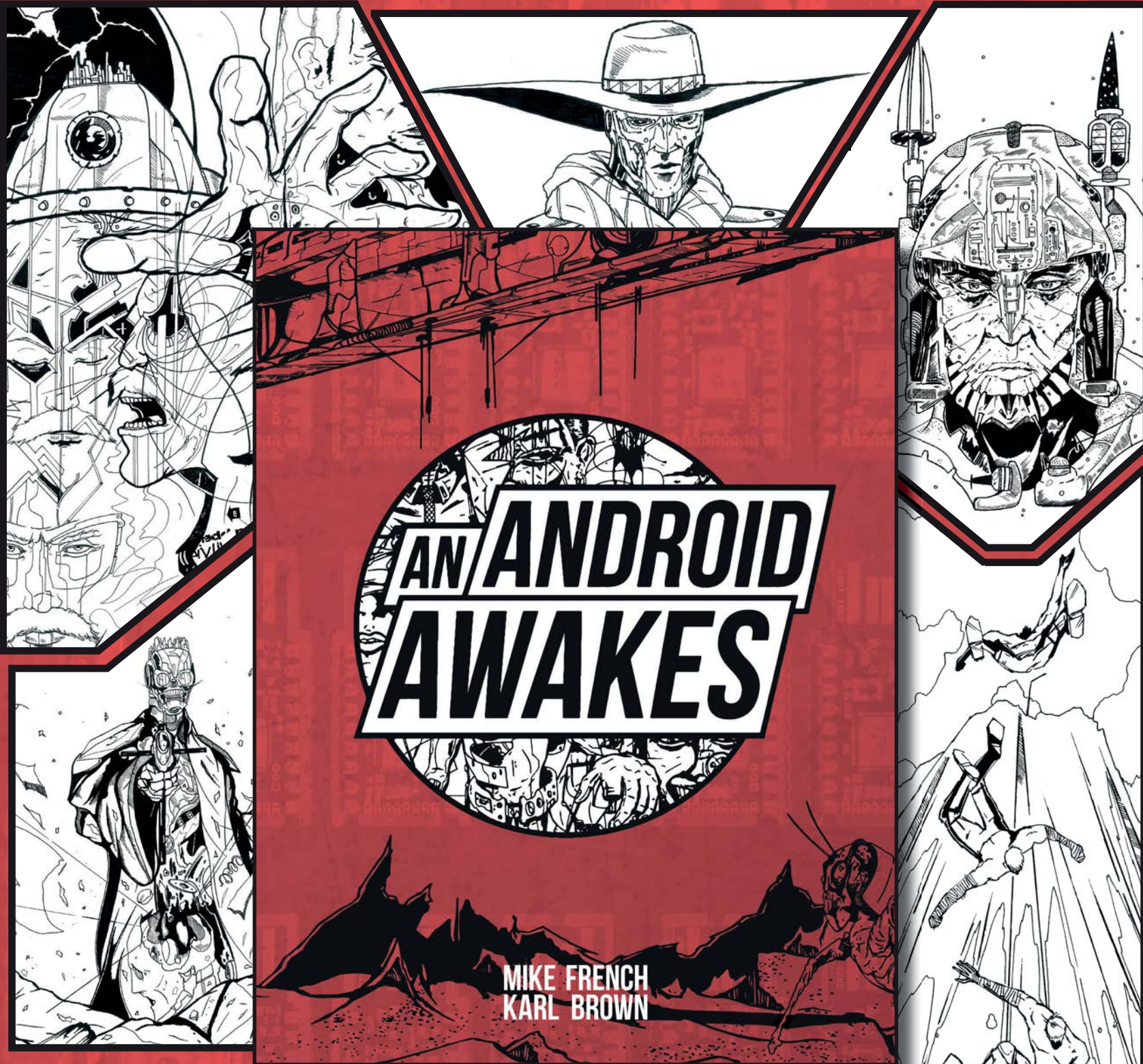
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